

KENNETH REXROTH

*"Rain upon Waldheim"
Voltaire de Cleyre
on the Haymarket Martyrs*

How heavy the heart is now, and every heart
Save only the word-drunk, power-drunk
Hard capsules of the doomed. How distraught
Those things of pride, the wills nourished in the fat
Years, fed in the kindly twilight of the books
In gold and brown, the voices that had little
To live for, crying for something to die for.
The philosophers of history,
Of dim wit and foolish memory,
The giggling concubines of catastrophe—
Who forget so much—Boethius' calm death,
More's sweet speech, Rosa's broken body—
Or you, tough, stubby recalcitrant
Of Fate.

Now in Waldheim where the rain
Has fallen careless and unthinking
For all an evil century's youth,
Where now the banks of dark roses lie,
What memory lasts, Emma, of you,
Or of the intrepid comrades of your grave,
Of Piotr, of "mutual aid",
Against the iron clad flame throwing
Course of time?

Your stakes were on the turn
Of a card whose face you knew you would not see.
You knew that nothing could ever be
More desperate than truth; and when every voice
Was cowed, you spoke against the coalitions
For the duration of the emergency—
In the permanent emergency
You spoke for the irrefutable
Coalition of the blood of men.

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Retort

(A quarterly journal of Anarchism, art, and reviews)

SPECIAL ANTHOLOGY ISSUE

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The periodical RETORT was originally published by the Retort Press, Bearsville, New York; Holley R. Cantine, Jr., editor. The present compilation is issued as part of a series of worthwhile anti-statist magazines, by THE MATCH, P. O. Box 3488, Tucson, AZ 85722; Fred Woodworth, editor.

CAN ANARCHISM
PROGRESS?



RESISTANCE IN PRISON



CONSCRIPTION
AND THE STATE



EDITORIALS



ART AND PLAY



RADICALS vs. WAR



TOWARDS A
REVOLUTIONARY
MORALITY



BOOK REVIEWS



FICTION

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EDITORIAL

Spring, 1945

In a purely negative sense, anarchism today probably has more adherents than any other school of thought. Never before in history has the State revealed itself more nakedly as an organ of repression and exploitation; never before have political corruption and incompetence been so widely known and accepted as inevitable. The working structure of society is speedily disintegrating, and in the process the validity of the insights of early anarchist thinkers like Proudhon and Bakunin is being demonstrated with a clarity for which they could scarcely have dared to hope.

Ironically, however, despite this widespread and growing awareness of the essential accuracy of anarchist theory (not, of course, based on any knowledge of that theory, but simply on unavoidable empirical evidence) there has been no significant growth of an organized anarchist movement which might give it direction and dedication. Organized anarchism, though it has grown somewhat in recent years, is still a feeble minority movement, probably with no more adherents, and very possibly with fewer than it possessed fifty years ago. How can one account for this extraordinary discrepancy? While it is clearly too much to expect that an anarchist movement would rise overnight to a position of dominance in political life, it would surely seem probable, in view of the obviously very widespread mistrust of governments and politicians in the world today, that such a movement should be increasing its numbers and influence fairly rapidly. However, this is not occurring to any observable extent.

The principal reason for this phenomenon is undoubtedly the fact that most of the people who have become disillusioned in politics have been so benumbed by the very forces that have disillusioned them that they have entirely ceased thinking in terms of social action. The State has not only revealed itself as a force

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in the evening, usually well after midnight, when the more inhibited guests have gone home and the rest are sufficiently liquored up to be ready for anything, a sort of spirit of the party begins to take over, fusing the participants into a spontaneous organic whole which is capable of very curious and memorable acts. At the party in question, the focal point of the evening was the so-called Charleston Contest, and had the party been sufficiently alive, this could have been the spark that started things moving. As it turned out it was merely an exhibition of rather extreme dancing (none of it the Charleston) with most of the people reduced to spectators while a dwindling number of couples competed. I can recall parties in the '20s when an event of this nature suddenly evolved into a mock revival meeting or voodoo ceremony, with everyone taking part, or at least experiencing the excitement—a sort of pseudo-religious ecstasy that could be quite breathtaking.

Of course, such a performance is only possible in an entirely spontaneous and abandoned atmosphere, and the heavy aura of self-consciousness that hung over this party was a serious detriment to even bogus spirituality. Perhaps we who have endured the terrible '40s are unable to recapture the fine, free and essentially naive gusto for wickedness that characterized the lighter side of the '20s. The '20s, despite the fond belief of its Flaming Youth, was—at least in perspective—a very innocent period. There was something ingenuous and good-natured about its revolt against Victorianism. The bottomless pit that the First World War had opened up before the Lost Generation was a shallow ditch compared to that which *our* generation has witnessed, and the consequent cynicism was childlike and lighthearted, in comparison to the numb apathy that is characteristic of the more advanced youth of today. The 'wild' party was the perfect vehicle for expressing this spirit, especially since, as the result of Prohibition—that last desperate stand of the forces of Puritanism—the simple act of taking a drink was transformed into a wicked and excitingly illegal event. (Today, the youth must resort to the more deadening narcotics to achieve a similar thrill). A party in the '20s that commemorated the '90s was a lively, good-natured spoofing of the previous generation's foibles; we of the '50s, with our prevailing atmosphere of doom and disintegration, are hardly in the proper mood to give the same sort of treatment to the youthful follies of *our* parental generation.

HOLLEY CANTINE

as malevolent and maleficent as the most hysterical anarchist had ever described it, but it has, at the same time, revealed its enormous power for destroying opposition and crushing the dissident individual. The knowledge that the State is a monster bent on destroying all humane values, has, for the most part, been derived from the fact that the State, in several countries—notably Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia—has proceeded to act this way with terrifying brutality and ferocity. The natural reaction to such a discovery has been to be paralyzed by terror rather than to calmly seek methods of organizing resistance. Even in those countries, like the United States, where the State has not yet achieved its full stature as an anti-human force, most of the people who have been shown its essential nature and foresee its probable future development have been too disquieted by the knowledge to do anything but look for a place to hide. The very suddenness of the revelation has been so stunning that resistance has appeared futile and action towards an alternative form of social organization hopeless.

Nevertheless, bad as the objective evidence of the depravity and power of the State has been, many individuals are either too optimistic or too courageous to be made completely hopeless by recognizing it. And the responsibility for the failure of the anarchist movement to gain strength from these elements rests to a large extent with that movement itself. Granted it was not prepared for the situation. Its numbers depleted in the '20s and early '30s by the apparently overwhelming success of the Bolshevik Revolution, it had few experienced propagandists or theorists left. (In this country at least, one rarely encounters a middle-aged anarchist who has been in the movement for long; they are nearly all over 60 or well under 40. Virtually an entire generation dropped out of the movement between 1918 and 1936 or 7.) Moreover, those who had remained in the seemingly doomed movement did so primarily out of sentimentality, and their main contribution to the current period has been a stubborn unwillingness to relinquish any vestige of the old ideas, thereby creating an atmosphere of sectarianism which has had a very discouraging effect on new converts.

Another factor is not at all unimportant in my opinion, not only as a reason why anarchism fails to grow today, but also why it has never, except in the somewhat diluted form of syndicalism, succeeded in attracting a wide following in the past. Anarchism, since its inception, has been primarily a movement of social criticism

and protest. In this it has not differed conspicuously from other radical tendencies, except for one important particular. Most other forms of radicalism expect to achieve their objective by taking over the State, either through the vote or by insurrection, and in their preparations for this task they have been able to provide a great deal of APPARENTLY PURPOSEFUL concrete activity for their followers. Anarchism, on the other hand, since it visualizes a COMPLETELY NEW form of society, cannot consistently engage in the type of short-term activities that provide the main outlet for the energies of the followers of more conventional radical groups. Political rallies, electioneering, nominating conventions—all the thrills and activity of a political campaign—are manifestly impossible for a movement whose central assumption is that political action is both futile and dangerous. But young people, especially those who have just begun to suspect that the status quo is fundamentally rotten, have lots of physical energy and a burning need for action, which can be satisfied, at least temporarily, by the many activities that a political party—even a small, powerless one—requires during election campaigns. The lack of an equivalent in anarchist activity has been a potent liability to the movement.

The syndicalist wing of anarchism has been able, in certain periods and various places—notably Spain, to provide an adequate substitute for such activity: organizing the unorganized workers in unions, agitating strikes, etc. Today, in the United States, however, this outlet is nothing like what it was when the IWW was in its heyday 30 or 40 years ago. Most of the workers are already 'organized' and the task of the anarcho-syndicalist is no longer that of going into comparatively virgin territory to propagate the idea of workers' solidarity, perhaps at the risk of his life. Rather, it is the much more discouraging and demoralizing job of persuading the workers that their present unions are no good and that they should form new ones. While many workers know all too well that the existing unions are entirely incapable of satisfying their real needs and demands, they are too disillusioned and apathetic to be much impressed by the idea that new unions could improve conditions.

It seems to me that the anarchist movement should pay more attention to this problem than they have done in the past. The early anarchist thinkers for the most part tended to assume that once the workers became aware of the true nature of the State, they would act spontaneously to overthrow it and set up a new society.

RETORT GOES TO A PARTY

Autumn, 1951

On March 24th last, in Greenwich Village, a party was thrown for the ostensible purpose of commemorating the 1920s. The editors of RETORT, being at the time on one of their occasional visits to New York, attended. It was a fairly large party—upward of 100 people, most of them costumed in the styles of the period—either authentic or reasonably faithful representations. There was a competent dixieland jazz band and an adequate amount to drink, the price of admission being a bottle. The party was held in a commodious sculptor's studio on the top floor of a loft building in a non-residential section of the Village, so there was both plenty of room and sufficient isolation to permit complete freedom from the usual urban inhibitions about noise.

Yet, in spite of all these manifest advantages, the party, as a party, and especially as an attempt to recapture the spirit of the '20s, didn't really come off. There was a good deal of boisterousness, some fairly wild dancing, and a determined effort on the part of the sponsors to keep things moving, but the atmosphere was not at all that of the period which was supposed to be commemorated, and the level of intensity that a really good party attains was never observable. The present writer, who has a very warm feeling for the '20s, perhaps because he was just a little too young to take part in the revels of that era, but old enough to have witnessed some of them, stayed on to the bitter end, hoping that something might turn up, but unfortunately the evening just wilted away, and when at 3 or 4 in the morning the last remaining revellers began looking for their coats, it was as if nothing had happened.

To the connoisseur of parties—and in the '20s, the party was an art form with many zealous devotees, not a few of whom gave their lives as a result of their single-minded dedication to art—a party is not really successful unless something happens other than the usual banalities of passings out, corner seductions, et al. Exactly *what* is supposed to happen is impossible to foresee (this is the chief charm of the party as an art form). At some point

with problems of gaining power, and has tended to regard solidarity as an incidental byproduct of a successful revolution. Moreover, since it has always been composed to a great extent of individuals who turned to radicalism because they were frustrated and maladjusted, and whose personalities were therefore badly warped, megalomania and factional strife have played a large part in its activities. While giving lip-service to solidarity, such radicals devote most of their time and energy to battling among themselves for petty advantages, or scoring inconsequential theoretical points in endless squabbles.

Until we can come to realize that human well-being is not going to spring fully formed from an economic reorganization of society, but must be carefully nurtured, on a basis of personal sympathy and understanding, our efforts will, in all likelihood, result in a worse society than the present one. The dignity of man and psychological security have been all but destroyed by the social institutions of modern society, and must be largely reconstructed from the ground up. This is an extremely difficult task in a society whose every emphasis is directed at dividing man from his fellows, and one which can only be undertaken by those who really feel that all human beings are brothers, regardless of the contempt they may hold for their beliefs. Only in person to person relationships can true solidarity be built, and without solidarity the most perfect economic structure can do little to promote the well-being of mankind.

This assumption has now been completely refuted by events. Without a concrete program of action, the workers simply lapse into apathy and resignation, however much they may be convinced of the evils of the existing society.

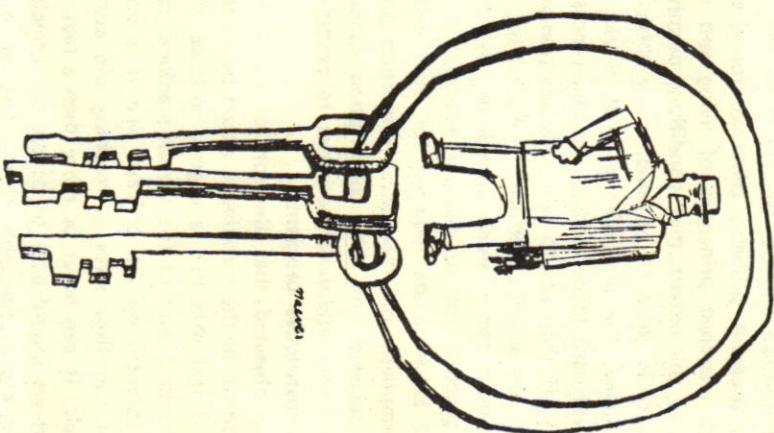
Since it is clearly ridiculous for a movement whose primary belief is that all government is useless and dangerous to engage in specifically political activity, the anarchists will have to develop a non-political program, probably centered around various work-projects in which anarchist principles of living and working are put into practice to the extent that conditions permit. The transition to a free society is going to be much more difficult than the old anarchists imagined; the principles of mutual aid, free association and equality will have to be worked out much more concretely than they are today, if they are to win wide acceptance. They can best be implemented by actual experiments—workshops, farm communes, cooperative houses, etc.—which consciously set out to put these principles in practice and to discover which forms of organization and individual behavior are required for their achievement. While the present emphasis on theoretical discussion and campaigns of resistance to specific evils like conscription cannot be neglected, the movement needs additional activities to provide it with a more positive and constructive program.

It may be objected that the sort of people who need action in order to remain in the movement would be of no ultimate value to anarchism. I feel that this is a great mistake. Anarchism, which aspires to become a way of life for all mankind, cannot base itself today, in its infancy, on the concept that it is only for a chosen few. Unless it can find ways of reaching and attracting adherents on a mass scale, it can never be more than a sect. I do not mean to suggest that we should alter or debase our principles and theories to make them more acceptable to the 'average man', as many of the political radicals have done. But surely anarchism is rich enough in potentialities that it should be reaching many more people than it is at present. Moreover, since anarchism is a philosophy which embraces all human activity, it is being badly served by a movement which confines itself to only a few small areas of human behavior.

Further discussion and suggestions on this question are invited.
H.C.

NOTE: The following article is from our forthcoming Prison Anthology. The illustration, by Lowell Naeve, is one of a series he has made for this book.

RESISTANCE IN PRISON



CLIF BENNET

Winter, 1949

For those who want a preview of the American police state in action, complete with distinguishing variations from the European model, thirty-two Federal correctional and penal institutions offer unlimited research facilities. Entrance requirements are stiff, but the experience may prove invaluable to anyone looking for a slingshot to use against the new Goliath.

TOWARDS A REVOLUTIONARY MORALITY

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importance in influencing moral attitudes. A highly competitive economic system, which places a premium on success at the expense of others can hardly be expected to contribute to such security, while a cooperative economy lends itself naturally to human brotherhood. This does not mean, however, that the form of the economy *determines* the moral standards of a culture. Human motivation is far more complex than that. The economic forms may themselves be profoundly altered by cultural attitudes and religious beliefs.

...While economic individualism seems to be a more probable basis for social conflict, and a consequent weak development of ethical standards of behavior, it is not impossible for a society to be economically cooperative, yet socially stratified and competitive. The Maori of New Zealand were virtually communists in the economic sense; everyone sharing equally in the food supply and each contributing their share of labor. However, the society was rigidly stratified politically, owing to the fact that one's social status was determined by one's order of birth. The eldest son was of higher rank...

It would thus appear that the form of the economy is not in itself an adequate basis for determining the moral standards of a society. Social stratification and conflict can exist without being caused by economic factors. While it would be futile to expect a moral renovation of modern society without profound economic reorientation, since the highly competitive economy of capitalism is in direct conflict with an attitude of human brotherhood, an economic change alone would be insufficient. A society which is stratified on the basis of prestige or ability can be just as competitive and have as little feeling of solidarity and emotional security, as one in which social distinctions are based on wealth. This is especially true in a bureaucratic setup, where there is likely to be bitter rivalry among jobholders, and a mad scramble for advancement in the hierarchy, whether or not there is a salary differential. Fraternal feeling and ethical behavior do not thrive in such an atmosphere.

...We must recognize that man can *survive* without feeling solidarity with his fellows, but he can do so only as a frustrated and anxiety-ridden brute. It is only through fostering an attitude of brotherhood that a social system which affords real emotional and social security can be made possible.

The radical movement, as it is now constituted, leaves much to be desired in its understanding of the principle of human brotherhood and in its ability to apply it. It has been primarily preoccupied

ture—a process at which the theological mind is peculiarly adept—in such a way as to 'prpve' that the moral law may be set aside if certain ritual precautions are taken. In such cases the church fills a role similar to that of the primitive sorcerer who, because of his superior training or ability, is supposed to be able to obtain better results from the spirits than a mere layman. The Christian churches have one great advantage over the sorcerer, however. While he has to accomplish what looks like a tangible result in order to satisfy his client, they do not have to offer any proof that the souls of the saved really go to heaven.

Theological codes of behavior do not distinguish between offenses of a strictly moral nature—that is: those which have an effect on human relations, like murder and theft—and sins which are purely ritualistic—like neglecting to observe a sacred ceremony or eating a forbidden food. Indeed, such a distinction would be impossible for them to make. Sins may be differentiated according to the degree of their seriousness, but since they all represent violations of commandments which are believed to be of divine origin, there is no basis for differentiating them qualitatively. This has frequently resulted in a conception of morality which is actually detrimental to social harmony. The ritual requirements of many religions run counter to the psychological needs of the individual, and therefore their enforcement causes emotional instability. The Calvinist prohibitions of drinking, dancing and sexual freedom lead naturally to the compensatory reactions of bigotry and fanaticism, which have had disastrous social consequences, as during the Salem witch trials, and the Prohibition experiment. The arbitrary asceticism of Roman Catholicism and Mohammedanism has likewise produced great social strife, in the form of Holy Wars and Inquisitions. The religious intuition is an extremely unreliable means of acquiring knowledge of what is best for humanity. The subconscious mind of the typical prophet is badly warped by frustration, and his 'revelations' usually intensify the maladjustment out of which they grew. The occasional brilliant insights of certain religious leaders should not blind us to the fact that most religious beliefs have been injurious to human well-being, and that there is no method whereby a sincere believer can distinguish the good from the bad.

III

If we define ethical behavior as that behavior which promotes the security—both physical and psychological—of one's fellows, it becomes obvious that the form of the economy is of fundamental

Organizing resistance within a prison requires an understanding of the inmate's state of mind. He cannot exercise initiative or choice, nor may he express himself freely in any way. His individuality is limited to making "Big Deal" talk with other cons about how many Packards and Billy Rose blondes wait for him outside the walls. With his ego thoroughly squashed and trampled on, he is further cramped emotionally by the prohibition against showing sympathy or solidarity with a mistreated fellow inmate. "Every man does his own time," is the iron sophistry of the walled city. The uniforms are there to see that you keep your eyes straight ahead while the man next to you is slugged and dragged down the corridor to the strip cell.

Thus starved for an opportunity to affirm their humanity, prisoners fall back heavily on the old American substitutes for honest emotion: Patriotism and Mama. The Federal prisons had one of the highest records in the country for War Bond sales. No cell is complete without a picture of Mama, and no issue of the prison paper escapes some maudlin Edgar Guest intent on explaining the particular virtues of his maternal parent.

The springboard for action which will restore some semblance of Man to the numbered fragments inside the wall is always some immediate grievance felt by the prison body as a whole or by some sizable group within it. Usually it is the prison food, which appears on the menu board in the mess hall under a variety of alluring names—and always turns out to be lumpy bread pudding.

Food strikes may be directed against the entire meal, with the men refusing to leave their quarters where possible, or marching through the mess hall with empty trays if attendance there is compelled. Where the action is directed against a specific item of food, inmates are wised up by the grapevine ahead of chow time, and take everything but the objectionable food. As a variation of the food boycott directed against one item, the scrapple, rotten frankfurters or greasy potatoes may be taken, hidden in a scrap of paper, or paper napkin, and dropped to the walk upon leaving the mess hall. It is unlikely to reappear on the tables, particularly after the Associate Warden had to wade through it to Officers' Mess.

Since refusal to eat cannot be ferreted out as an assault on the prison administration, it is a good initial move prior to a strike. In both the minimum and maximum custody institutions, we found

that a food boycott, once popular, tended naturally to become a work strike. Once the prisoners had refused a meal, they gathered in little groups in the yard. "No eat, no work," they said. And the hardier souls among them would refuse to report to their work detail.

The extreme form of the food boycott is the hunger strike. When a large number of men take this action, it cannot be expected to last more than a day or two at the longest. The hunger strike is better adapted to the use of individuals or small, highly dedicated groups with a long-range view of what is to be accomplished.

In any action taken by the prison population as a group, the initiators must be familiar with the routine steps to put down resistance, and the working rules for relations with the prison authorities during times of unrest. The prison officials will use:

(1) Soft soap. The confidence man on the prison staff, usually the Warden or an Associate Warden, will try to have the strikers herded into the auditorium and, with the prescribed combination of sternness and paternal concern, will promise them the moon if they get back into harness.

(2) Intimidation. This may be directed against the group as a whole, or individuals suspected as troublemakers may be weeded out and brought to the Warden's Office for a reprimand and warning. Solitary confinement, loss of 'good time', and shipment to a tougher pen are the usual threats.

(3) Violence. Pick handles are a favorite weapon. Water hoses are sometimes used; if one of these is brought into a cell block prison etiquette demands that you use mattresses and blankets for shelter so the officers may destroy prison property without your wasting energy on the job. Tear gas and guns are brought out only in extreme situations; the American prison guard does not as a rule develop a great deal of personal animosity even in critical moments. His attitude is "That's the regulations." He would undoubtedly lock up his own father with the same impersonal loyalty to the Officers' Manual.

To meet the inevitable soft soap, the strikers must have a clear idea of their objective. They must have a definite demand, or set of demands, which it is possible for the administration to meet. They must agree before striking that they will not return to work until these demands are granted or the strike is broken by force. They must present these demands at the first chance.

To insure the continuation of the strike after the spokesmen

and evil, but is essentially a technique for controlling nature by means of ritual acts. This belief appears to arise spontaneously as a psychological response to frustration, and can be observed in small children who have been given no theological training. One somehow 'knows' that he will get what he wants if he will only hold his breath for a certain length of time, or avoid stepping on the cracks in the sidewalk.

This form of religion is very widespread among primitive peoples. A Pawnee farmer, for instance, will plant a curiously shaped stone in his garden, in the belief that it will insure a good crop. If it doesn't work, he will try a different stone, but not forsake the principle. Throughout Polynesia, the construction of large war canoes and public buildings is attended by elaborate ceremonies, which are considered to be as essential to the success of the enterprise as the carpentry techniques. Similar examples could be cited from all parts of the world. ... Whenever life is difficult or dangerous it is a great source of comfort to be able to convince oneself that all problems can be solved by a simple act of magic.

The amorality of such a conception is obvious enough. All that is necessary to establish rapport with the universe is knowledge of the proper rituals—a sort of technological knowledge which can be manipulated by anyone. What is perhaps not quite so obvious is that those religions which have acquired a moral content have not really altered the basic magical approach. For ritual they have substituted standards of behavior—the idea of sin—but the underlying principle remains the same. A believer in a theological moral code is good, according to doctrine, because by being good he is fulfilling the will of god, and thereby avoiding divine retribution, just as the Pawnee is averting crop failure with his magic stone. Both are manipulating nature to achieve a desired end, the only difference being that the moral religionist is manipulating his own nature. If he can find some way of appealing the supernatural which does not require moral behavior—and virtually all theological codes provide such loopholes—he need not have the least compunction about disregarding ethical commandments. Since the only reason for moral behavior is to please the deity, one is not violating his religious responsibilities by breaking the moral law, if he can do so without incurring god's displeasure. Thus, nearly all of the Christian churches sanction war, despite the specific prohibition of killing in their doctrine. This apparent violation of principle has been justified by a subtle process of interpreting scrip-

their house in order and purge themselves of the worldliness which has brought them into disrepute, but few of them are capable of going beyond that.

Nevertheless, despite their confusion of cause and effect and their lack of understanding of the complexity of human motivation, some of these religious thinkers have a clearer grasp of the *nature* of the situation than do the more orthodox radicals. Being under no compulsion to interpret society in purely economic terms, they have been able to focus their attention on the degeneration of human relations and the relaxation of morality. While they are certainly wrong in believing that the church could bring about a revival of moral behavior, they are right in pointing out the need for such behavior. The radicals, on the other hand, are apparently incapable of profiting from the mistakes and failures of the past and continue to believe that morality is simply a byproduct of the economic system. For them, therefore, the only problem to solve is one of economic reorganization.

...There is no denying that economic factors play an extremely important part in social development, but to interpret them as the sole determinant of human motivation leads to conclusions which are almost as inaccurate as those of the theologians, with the exclusive preoccupation with original sin. The economic system is itself subject to great modification by psychological factors, and the conduct of revolutionists before achieving power is bound to influence the sort of society they will establish. Unless serious attention is given to problems of fundamental morality, there is no reason to believe that an economic revolution would lead to anything more desirable than Germany or Russia have achieved. This does not mean, however, that the radical movement has need of a theological approach. Ethics and religion are far from inseparable; in fact, they have always been rather uncomfortable bedfellows. A truly revolutionary ethics, based on a scientific understanding of man's nature and needs is what is called for.

II

The connection between religion, in the sense of belief in the supernatural, and morality, seems to have been the result of a largely fortuitous historical development, and the combination has never been a stable one. Supernaturalism in its simplest and most basic form—the belief in magic—contains no conception of good

are sent to solitary or shipped (usually in the middle of the night, or while the population is locked in cell blocks) a succession of leadership should be agreed on, with alternate contacts in each cell block.

When violence is used by the officials, passive resistance is most effective in prison. It is sometimes difficult to adhere to, but will result in increased sympathy from those not striking and will conserve the rebellious spirit of the men for future action. An excess of violence on the part of the inmates, even in self-defense, will exhaust their ardor and postpone a resurgence for a long time. As in guerrilla warfare, the objective is not the individual enemy, but his materials, means of communication and morale.

Leadership must be alert to all local developments of value to the strikers. In the Danbury prison strike of 1946 the administration was aware of plans for a strike because of news releases sent out by coordinating groups in the 'free world'. A fake demonstration was held in the prison yard on the day before the strike was scheduled in the hope that prison officials might think that was the limit of the disturbance. The following day was Lincoln's Birthday and the strike might have been a dismal failure had not the officials obligingly ordered all men to report to their work assignments on the morning of that day.

Danbury prison at that time held a large number of Negro Selective Service cases, most of whom worked in the prison industry, a glove factory. The initial agitation was therefore directed at the Negro cell block, with the result that the prison industry was closed down, half the population demonstrated and sang songs in the yard, and two or three hundred refused to be enticed into the mess hall by a chicken dinner.

At the same prison, the inmate paper was edited by a company man who diffused more than the ordinary smell of polecat. When he put out an issue urging acceptance of the officials' plan for an Inmate Advisory Council (company union), all available copies were gathered up in every cell block, tied together in a bundle and delivered to the Warden without comment.

In the Lewisburg strike of 1947, the administration put forward this company union proposal right in the middle of the fireworks. Slips of paper were distributed to every cell, so the inmate might indicate his choice of representatives for the projected pint-sized parliament. The sewage disposal system was jammed with paper slips for several hours.

Whether the political prisoners are segregated or mixed with the

prison population, a few points of agreement will simplify their job. First, they should make no contract of any kind with the administration. Second, they should refuse to deal singly with any prison official on any matter that might conceivably be a group concern. Third, they should refrain from violence in defending themselves against officers.

Of course, the resister will find that a contract is 'assumed' between himself and the officials, and that certain things are 'expected' of him. There is, however, no pretense that the inmate has the right to change, or even to interpret, this assumed contract. Interpretations—several different ones to fit each situation—will come from the Warden's office.

In instances where the resisters are segregated in one cell block, and none of them has any illusions about making parole, a number of joyful pastimes are offered which are guaranteed to furnish gray hair for the Warden and a rapid transfer to maximum custody for those involved. If the cell doors are of the individual lock type plus a master control operated manually or electrically from a box available only to the officer, the entire cell block may be put out of operation in a few minutes by stuffing paper clips, spring steel, fork tines and similar obstacles into the keyhole. In many prisons, the door hinges may be sprung by rolling a blanket tightly and inserting it on the hinge side while the door is swung closed against it. If the controls are operated entirely from a master box, and the doors are of the sliding variety, the keyhole on the master box may be plugged if it can be reached.

Most prisons have a vulnerable ventilating system which opens into corridors through panels equipped with Allen head screws. An Allen head screwdriver may, with patience, be shaped from a large nail. The water supply and waste pipes are usually run in these ducts. This ventilating system is a hollow steel drum, and a proper beating administered in the panels by five or six men will carry through the entire institution—officers' sleeping quarters included.

Where demands are being made which are important enough to warrant drastic action by the group, I.W.W. experience has developed a couple of useful methods applicable to practically any jail. In the case of concrete construction, there is a procedure known as "building a battleship" which involves ten or fifteen men locking arms and standing as close together as possible. They count, "One, two, three," and on the count of three all jump together. When two or three tons of men land on a small area of

TOWARDS A REVOLUTIONARY MORALITY

Spring, 1943

H.R. CANTINE JR.

The profound deterioration of civilized standards of conduct during recent years has brought about a great deal of discussion concerning the role of ethical criteria in social thinking. This discussion has been endlessly confused by the assumption that moral standards are the exclusive province of theological religion, an assumption made by both the religionists and their more orthodox radical opponents.

The religious leaders of nearly all sects are agreed that the primary cause of the world crisis is loss of faith. They accuse the philosophers of materialism and rationalism of being the true originators of totalitarianism. Man, they insist, is weak and sinful. Without the restraining influence of the fear of god, he invariably lets his baser nature get out of control, with fatal consequences for civilized values. Conveniently overlooking the state of society when the church was dominant, they assert that the only hope for democracy, or indeed for civilization itself, lies in a return to the religious beliefs of our fathers.

This theological explanation of the cause and cure of catastrophe is, of course, grossly inaccurate. Since they are unable to account for human motivation except in terms of fear of divine retribution, the theologians completely fail to recognize the economic and social factors involved in the development of society. To them all the evils of today are directly traceable to those philosophers who supposedly turned man away from god, and at most they are willing to concede that the church was partly to blame: it did not combat its own internal abuses with sufficient vigor, thereby providing the opposition with valuable ammunition. Thus, their solution is hopelessly naive: man has only to renounce his disbelief, and restore the church to its 'rightful' place in society, and harmony and security will soon be established. For their part they promise to set

responsibility. Except in comparatively rare instances, men are only able to take human life when they are acting under orders from some higher authority which sanctions the killing and absolves them of all personal responsibility for the act. It does not matter particularly whether this authority is an imperialist state, the Church Militant, or a revolutionary party—in each case it is the organization that bears the responsibility and not the individual. From the standpoint of social equality and freedom, the dangers inherent in this situation should be obvious. Once an individual has been trained, or come to accept the principle that he is not personally responsible for what he does, his ability to act independently, as a member of a free, self-governing community is necessarily impaired. It is well known that ex-soldiers do not make good democrats; that their tendency is follow a leader, blindly and unquestioningly. It is frequently argued that this could be remedied, in a revolutionary army, by giving greater individual responsibility to the soldiers, choosing officers by popular vote, etc. This reasoning seems to me to be based on a fundamental misconception of the nature of militarism: it is not authoritarian simply because it has an undemocratic heritage, which could be destroyed by changing the leadership and making certain structural changes in the army, but because the natural tendency of the average soldier, consciously or unconsciously, is to evade moral responsibility for his actions by transferring it to his superiors. Let us not forget that Napoleon started his career as an officer in a revolutionary army, and that he achieved his power to a great extent because of the support of his troops. Likewise, in both the Russian and the Spanish Civil Wars, the revolutionary armies started out very democratic, but had become thoroughly autocratic before the war was over.

It will be objected that without the use of armed force, the overthrow of the existing system would be impossible. I do not believe that this is true. It is quite possible that a revolutionary minority would be unable to establish itself in control of the state without making use of military methods, but since a maneuver of this sort has nothing to do with a genuine classless society, it is beside the point. A truly free and equal social system can only be realized when a substantial majority of the working population are consciously in favor of it, and in this case, such techniques of struggle as the strike, the boycott, sabotage and civil disobedience should be perfectly adequate to shake loose the ruling class.

floor most buildings feel it. In steel tank jails similar to most county lock-ups, marching in unison around uprights will shake bolts and rivets loose, and can even affect welded construction.

In their relations to the prison population, segregated resisters must remember that a barrier of fear exists between themselves and the conforming inmates, based on the ingenious "pie in the sky" system by which prisoners are coerced into good behavior. The inmate hopes he will make parole when his one-third term expires. Usually, he fails that, since paroles are kept to a percentage established by tradition. No reason is given for this refusal. With hope of parole gone, he looks forward to earning additional "good time" toward earlier release. If unable to do this by working on the prison farm or in prison industry, he still has his conditional release date—earlier than the "full time" date—to hope for. Any infringement of regulations will lose him precious days. These days will be taken away—no specified number for any specified infraction—piecemeal by a special court of officials.

Knowing this fear and uncertainty in the prisoner's mind, the resister relies heavily on humor in attacking the administration. If you can get the inmates to laugh at an officer, half the battle against prison discipline is won.

In one of the Danbury demonstrations, the administration's phoney Christmas spirit was challenged by a large banner strung from the baseball backstop: "FREEDOM IS THE BEST CHRISTMAS GIFT". The slogan appealed to the inmates, and the hacks who were delegated to tear it down met with a roar of disapproval from the crowd, followed by laughter as the wind whipped one end of the banner loose and the guards struggled to get it under control. On another occasion, when the resisters were stirring up feeling about a man locked up in modified solitary, signs were tacked to broom handles, shoved out between the window bars, and unrolled. Inmates returning to quarters from the mess hall stopped to watch while guards placed ladders against the wall and climbed up to snatch the signs. As the uniformed arms stretched out to tear the signs down, however, they were quickly rolled up around the broom handles again and pulled in through the bars, to repeat their performance at another window. The thwarted officers again got the horselaugh.

One elderly guard developed the bad habit of hiding in a recessed doorway beneath our cell block, darting out to pick up

messages thrown from the window to other inmates. One of our inventive geniuses took a couple of pieces of toilet tissue, smeared them liberally with stale mustard, wrapped them in another piece of tissue, and tossed them out. The uniform fell for it and elbowed a couple of inmates out of the way in his dash to pick up the "secret message". He got it, all right, and looked mighty silly glancing from his smeared hands to our window.

If you have a lot of time on your hands, an illegal newspaper can be published and distributed with the most primitive equipment. A tin can, milk bottle, or shaped piece of wood, or the sole of a shoe will form a simple mimeograph machine. A piece of blanket will make a mimeograph pad. You can cement it to the tin can etc. with a highly efficient glue made of oatmeal strained through a sock. Stencils and ink may be "borrowed" from the prison office by another inmate. If gelatin can be obtained from the prison kitchen, a duplicator can be made, using any flat container for the gelatin, and an indelible pencil for the master copy. If you can't get paper any other way, do what one of our boys in solitary did: wash the print off magazine pages.

As conditions get tighter, you may find yourself locked securely in individual cells. If there is a half inch of space under the door as there usually is, flat objects may be passed from one cell to another by making a thin rope of tied shoelaces or sheet strips with a weight at one end. This can be skidded across the corridor and under a door on the opposite side. Between floors the ventilating system may be used for talking. Useful things like checkers, chess pieces and so on may be fashioned from a papier mache made of shredded newspapers with oatmeal paste for binder. There are a hundred ways to maintain your morale, and on occasion, to lower that of your opponent. Once, when feeling particularly morose, I cheered myself up by converting three full-size sheets into a pair of rope-soled shoes, and fashioned a medicine ball out of fourteen sets of winter underwear and a laundry bag.

When there are only a tiny handful of resisters, the most dramatic actions are inadvisable.

They may be supplanted by cautious sabotage and the stupidity strike, plus slowdown wherever applicable. The plumbing, lighting and communication systems are vulnerable. Schweikism is the last resort of the individual resister. How much material he may damage in his well-meaning blundering is a matter for the prison book-keeping system.

the new society would spring into being spontaneously once the old order had been destroyed. In neither case did it matter especially what means were employed, and since military methods promised to achieve results more quickly than any other, they were widely favored. This was given a certain plausibility at the time, moreover, by the fact that the art of war was still in a relatively primitive stage of development, and a poorly equipped army of revolutionists might very well be a match for the forces that could be mustered by the existing government.

Today the situation is greatly altered. While an irregular army of revolutionists stood some chance of defeating a regular army equipped with single-shot rifles and muzzle-loading cannons, it is no match for tanks, dive-bombers and modern siege artillery, as events in Spain, and more recently in Poland and Greece have demonstrated. But what is infinitely more important is the fact that military methods have been discovered to be utterly incompatible with the attainment of a really free and equal society. It is now recognized by radicals who have given serious consideration to the matter that such a society cannot be imposed by a benevolent minority, nor will it arise spontaneously upon the destruction of the status quo. The Russian Revolution has exploded both of these hypotheses. Serious radicals have come to realize that the means employed to bring about socialism have a very important influence on the kind of socialism achieved, and that to prepare for a society of freedom and equality, it is necessary to build up the sort of organization, and to foster the attitudes and behavior, which will promote these values. Therefore, aside from purely humanitarian considerations—and these also are very important in a movement dedicated to brotherhood and human dignity (it is one of the worst inconsistencies of a large section of contemporary radicalism that, while it professes to be working for the good of all mankind, it dismisses any concern for the victims of bloodshed as 'sentimentality')—military methods of achieving the new society must be rejected because they are fundamentally out of harmony with the psychological basis of equality and freedom.

The taking of human life, as Tolstoy has pointed out, is not an activity in which the average individual engages voluntarily and in cold blood. The average man can be made into an efficient and ruthless killer, but first he must undergo a rigorous period of preparation, to deaden his moral sensibilities and his sense of

A radical campaign for an immediate peace would resemble the liberal efforts in this direction only in its broad objective—just as in civil liberties cases, both radicals and liberals are attempting to free the victims. Radicals would not, as the liberal pacifists are inclined to do, present the demand for peace as if they were asking the government to correct an oversight, nor would they pretend that peace would mean enduring bliss for the country, and the world. On the contrary, they could continue to emphasize that the existing government is incapable of making a just and lasting peace—as it cannot be trusted to maintain civil liberties. They would consequently present the goal of peace frankly as a stopgap, which would solve no fundamental problems, and which, in all probability, wouldn't last—unless the workers took further action. It might be objected that such a presentation would be too negative and colorless to have any appeal, but I believe that the average worker is sufficiently sophisticated to recognize that the advantages of not being shot at, and not being restricted and regimented in the hundred and one ways the war requires, are desirable in themselves, even though they do not represent Utopia.

IV

Many of the radicals who oppose the present war are not against war as such, but only 'imperialist wars', that is, wars which are fought by capitalist or totalitarian states for profits, foreign markets and colonies. Radicals of this school of thought believe that wars fought for 'progressive' ends—notably civil wars—warrant their full support and participation. Today, they are enthusiastic champions of the irregular armies of Poland, Greece and France, and become furiously indignant if it is suggested that the American Civil War, the French Revolutionary Wars, the Spanish Civil War, or even the Russian Civil War did not benefit the cause of the oppressed.

This attitude has long seemed to me a romantic carryover from an earlier day when the full implications of radicalism had not yet been worked out. Most of the radicals of the nineteenth century did not believe that the achievement of a free and equal society would be a very difficult problem. They either assumed that such a society could be brought about by a radical minority which would seize control of the state, and then manipulate the masses into the proper state of mind, or they believed that

This matter of the bookkeeping system brings up the angle of getting the drop on an official by uncovering manipulations with the prison budget. In one Federal prison, it was found that a three-way split existed between the warehouse officer, meat dealer and front office. The meat ordered would total 400 pounds. The dealer would deliver 300, but the warehouseman would receipt for the full amount shown on the bill and the front office would pay for it. The take went three ways.

In another prison, a 30' by 25' frame shop with a dirt floor cost \$3000 to build with free labor, while a chicken house of cinder block ran to \$10,000 with the same free labor. Six inches of sand was dumped on the floor, to be scraped up and thrown out the same year. Irregularities of this sort run through the whole Bureau of Prisons, and it is a rare guard or official who is not lining his pocket with cash or material covered by the jailhouse budget.

The waste which is a unique feature of American economy is sharply evident in prison. Often, food produced on the prison farm will be left on the ground to rot while the men inside the wall belch along on eternal beans and bread pudding. This occurs because prison bookkeeping systems demand that the food from the prison farm be charged against the kitchen at the market price. At Lewisburg Penitentiary, a large portion of the tomato crop rotted in 1946 because the market price of tomatoes happened to be too high to permit the cons to eat the food they had raised.

Prison is an unhappy parable of life in "outside" society!

EDITORIAL

Winter, 1947

THERE IS NO SOCIAL CONTRACT!

There still appear to be liberals, who while they may be skeptical of the justice, power, or potential achievements of the U.N., fail to see the injustice, arbitrariness, and invariable failure of the single 'nation' or state.

Few are so naive as to suppose that the present peace show is anything more than a vehicle of power politics, which—if it has even that function—allocates the division, repression and rule over smaller 'nations'.

Yet when the power of any particular state, more particularly their own or some power they conceive to be representative of them—is called into question, they immediately hurl about 'lawfully delegated federation', 'just and equitable commonwealth'. They conceive of the 'state' as possessing powers that will prevent their house from being broken into and robbed.

Such liberals resent the charge that the consider man to be fundamentally evil. When one points out that even in terms derived from their own beliefs, the state could then be nothing more than a coercive instrument for protecting the majority of good men from the small number that is evil, they are not content.

The more sophisticated liberals, particularly those with academic philosophical training, pretend to believe that the powers of the state are delegated through a social contract by men that are neither good nor evil, but capable of both. It is, then, against the evil in all men, rather than evil men, that the state devolves its powers. But consider the blatant idiocy of the claim that the state is an agency for the prevention of the evil in man's nature from rising to ascendancy, (cf. Calvinism) when we can see that the organized evil of the state, perhaps more in contemporary times than ever before, has no match for setting loose the satanic furies that are supposed to lurk in men—that very state designed to protect the good in men.

Since war, both from the standpoint of the working class as a whole, and the radical workers in particular, is a much greater menace than the mere imprisonment of an individual, it should follow that radicals would act in the most vigorous manner to bring it to an end. Not only are large numbers of workers being drafted into the army, thereby running a serious risk of being killed or wounded, but the right to strike, and civil liberties generally, are endangered in wartime as at no other time. Only the assumption that the war is in the interests of the oppressed—an assumption which no genuine radical could make concerning the present conflict—could provide a principled excuse for the radicals' failure to act.

Contemporary radicals, however, are not really very much concerned with principles, and when pressed will usually defend their inactivity with arguments that are based on pure expediency. Since the working class, and particularly the organized workers, have accepted the war with great docility, the radicals contend that they cannot advocate anti-war activity, thereby running the risk of alienating their potential followers. Anyhow, they argue, the war is nearly over, and it is too late to do anything about it.

It is difficult to cope with arguments like this, not because they are valid, but because they represent such a thoroughly debased version of radicalism that it scarcely seems worth bothering with. These are not the arguments of people who are seriously working for a better world, but of cynical politicians who are only interested in power for themselves. Radicalism that is worthy of the name does not wait for the 'masses' to make the first move. If this had been the policy of radicals in the old days, it is impossible to imagine how the movement would have gotten started. The true radical is an agitator, who regards it as his function to combat apathy and hostility on the part of the workers; he does not go into hiding until they begin to act in a revolutionary manner, and then jump on the bandwagon.

The argument that it is too late to do anything about the war is also a byproduct of the modern radical's lack of initiative rather than honest conviction. It has been current now for at least two years, during which time something could surely have been done. Even today, although Europe has already been 'liberated'—*obliterated* would be a better word—the armies have not yet been withdrawn, and the Asiatic war is still in progress.

would not destroy the system under which he was unjustly imprisoned and (2) It would help to create the fatal illusion that the government was a benevolent institution which could be depended upon to do the right thing for the workers in the long run. There may be some extreme sectarians who would argue in this manner, but I have never met up with any of them. In actual practice, radical groups, when confronted by a civil liberties case, make use of one or the other of two approaches.

The liberal approach, which is comparable with the liberal, write-your-congressman-to-end-the-war technique, consists of arguing that the arrest is unconstitutional; that there has been a miscarriage of justice which must be remedied. The fundamental integrity of the legal system is not questioned: on the contrary, the violation of the victim's civil rights is depicted as incomprehensible, and the possibility that the authorities might be acting with malice aforethought is ignored. Such a campaign can very easily play an essentially counter-revolutionary role. It buttresses the pretensions of the status quo in the act of opposition. By making the case appear as a rare exception, it tacitly implies that the rule is just and honorable.

The radical approach, on the other hand, makes no attempt to conceal the fact that the legal code is weighted in favor of the status quo, and that the victim is being persecuted for his views—not unexpectedly, through some slip-up in the law-enforcing machinery, but as a logical consequence of the whole emphasis of the code. The courts are not called upon, respectfully, to undo an error, but indicted as agents of the enemies of the working class. The radicals do not stop here, however; they set out to enlist as much popular support for the victim as possible, and use this support to put pressure on the government to release its victim. By organizing demonstrations, strikes, and similar public disturbances, they make it so uncomfortable for the government that finally it grudgingly yields. If and when the victim is released as the result of such pressure, no one can possibly conclude that the government has acted out of benevolence or a desire that an injustice be corrected; it has obviously been forced, by the action of the workers, and against its will, to make a concession. Thus, the system stands condemned as the enemy of the elementary rights of the workers, and at the same time the workers have been aroused to concrete, and to a degree, successful, action against it.

The question we must ask these men, who in years of such transparent cynicism and despondency have 'evolved' in their thinking from Rousseau to Hobbes, is: if man is neither good nor evil, why is evil so much more powerful than good, that an ORGANIZATION of good—the state—is required to keep the evil in check? Furthermore, how do they reconcile their definition of the state as an organization of the good in man with its being a 'NECESSARY evil'. Liberals will time and again give this schizoid definition of 'the state'.

In this connection they use society and the state interchangeably, arguing that if there were no state there would be no organized society; progressives continuing in this vein, feel that the increasing complexity and corruption are inherent and inevitable. The idea or possibility of establishing a society of simplicity and statelessness is consequently incomprehensible to them.

We must omit 'necessary' from the definition and substitute 'unmitigated'. The state is an unmitigated evil. Aside from the usual discernable reasons, there is a further one that must be recognized by radicals: that is, the irresponsibility—which if man may be said to have any inherent qualities—seems to be inherent in man. Man invariably and willingly relinquishes his individual duties to a group. It is not merely gullibility, which many of us have hitherto believed to be a dominant cause for the failure of revolutions such as the Russian; it is the unwillingness of individual men to assume responsibility for their own well being.

It does not appear likely that any satisfactory social change will occur until man has developed an ingrained mistrust of all forms of institutions and organizations, except perhaps small groups within which he functions with full responsibility and an equal share of control. We may no longer think in terms of social contract—power delegated by us to some mythical organization of the popular will. For while there is an organization of a small minority of people with power over us all, its power is not delegated; it is usurped. THERE IS NO SOCIAL CONTRACT!

ART: PLAY AND ITS PERVERSIONS

Fall, 1947

HOLLEY CANTINE

Nearly all of the higher animals, especially when they are young, prefer to occupy themselves a good part of the time with activity that has no direct practical value. In all save man, this activity is of a purely physical nature—jumping, racing, frisking about, or pretending to fight with one another. Man, as a result of his more highly developed intellect, and the accumulated culture produced by it, has built up a complex range of play. In some of its forms, human play resembles that of the other animals to a large extent, but other forms have become so refined and altered that it is frequently difficult to recognize that they belong in the same category.

Probably the most widely misunderstood of the forms of human play are those fields of activity which are classified as the fine arts—music, poetry, painting and so forth. So much has been written attempting to prove that art possesses some 'higher' or at least functional significance, that it is only by observing the behavior of small children, who not yet become fully conscious of their social role, and who spontaneously alternate singing, dancing and plastic art with the playful actions of other species, that one can see it in its proper perspective.

It is generally recognized that play is natural and necessary for small children, but it is widely held that it is somehow inappropriate and beneath the dignity of adults. In many societies, particularly those that are based on class or status stratification, adult play is actively discouraged. At a certain age, which varies somewhat depending on culture, class and historical period, but which roughly coincides with puberty, the individual's desire for play is rather abruptly subjected to a concerted campaign of ridicule and repression. He is now no longer a child and should cease to behave like one. The time has come when he must assume the responsibilities and dignity of adult status.

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more than a year that there was no longer any possible danger of the Nazis dominating the world, and that the real threat of world domination comes from the Big Three. Nonetheless, not a single war - radical has yet remembered that his defection from radicalism was only supposed to last until the Nazi Peril had been eliminated.

III

What radical opposition to the war exists is, for the most part, of a curiously abstract character. While opposing the war in theory and noisily proclaiming his ideological purity in this matter, the typical anti-war radical is horrified at the suggestion that he should actively resist the war. He does not hesitate to take a job in a munitions factory, or even go into the armed forces, and the proposal that he should advocate an immediate peace drives him to fury. He stigmatizes this position as bourgeois, on the grounds that only a social revolution can really destroy the roots of war, and that to advocate anything short of this betrays the working class by creating the illusion that the status quo can be trusted to further their interests.

It is quite true that many of the proponents of an immediate peace are heavily influenced by bourgeois liberal thinking, and are far from revolutionary in their approach and objectives. It is also true that ending the war, in itself, leaves unsolved the major problems of mankind, and does not guarantee that there will not be a new war in the near future. However, in my opinion, such considerations are largely irrelevant to the real question, and are raised only to confuse the issue and excuse the radicals for their inaction. A campaign to end the war can be either bourgeois liberal or radical depending on the methods it employs, and its attitude towards the existing government. By way of analogy, let us examine the way civil liberties cases are handled by radicals, as distinguished from liberals.

According to the logic of the anti-war, anti-peace radicals, if a member of a radical group is arrested and imprisoned for his activities, the group should conduct a campaign pointing out that the legal system of status quo is unjust and detrimental to the interests of the working class, but they should not, by any means, demand that the victim be released. Such a demand, according to this viewpoint, would be essentially bourgeois and counter-revolutionary inasmuch as (1) The release of the imprisoned radical

the government—especially in wartime when it is at its most repressive and vicious) are a phenomenon which seems to occur in all wars, no matter how blatantly imperialistic they are. It is primarily a manifestation of emotional instability rather than a serious and principled position. Certain radicals, when confronted by the fact of war, tend to lose control of their emotions, and in spite of strong intellectual convictions, sometimes extending over many years, are swept into the patriotic camp. Usually, of course, they succeed in rationalizing this departure from principle, at least to their own satisfaction, and insist vehemently that they have not really changed their views, but the rationalizations are almost invariably a pathetic blend of retrospective falsification and an hysterical acceptance of premises which run counter not only to their own previous convictions, but to the whole philosophy of radicalism.

To expose the arguments which the radical victims of war psychosis put forward to justify their position is largely a waste of time, because they are not really prepared to argue the question. Their rationalizations are merely a face-saving device and have no causal connection with their actual state of mind. For example, most of the war-radicals of the Second World War took the position that the failure of independent working-class action to prevent the spread of Nazism had left them with no alternative but to support the 'lesser evil' of the United Nations, since the Nazis were so efficient at suppressing internal dissent that a German victory would destroy forever the possibility of struggling for a better social system. Once the danger of a Nazi-dominated world had been averted, they maintained, it would be safe for radicals to return to their traditional opposition to the status quo. This argument, if true, logically reduces the fundamental assumptions of radicalism to absurdity, since if the Nazi techniques for suppressing opposition are so effective that they could never have been overthrown from below, it should follow that these same techniques, in the hands of the victorious rulers of Russia, and the other United Nations—who have had ample opportunity to learn everything the Nazis had to teach and have given no evidence that they would hesitate to apply it—would be equally effective, thus ending for good the possibility of a better world. Moreover, the war-radicals are not even capable of accepting the logic of their own 'lesser evil' theory. It has been perfectly obvious for

It is the purpose of this article to attempt to demonstrate that the repression of the play impulse in adults is an arbitrary and largely harmful process, which results from the compulsions imposed by class stratification. The play impulse should be recognized as an important part of man's fundamental nature, and provided with adequate outlets, free from guilt and shame. Moreover, the separation between childhood and maturity is not imposed by nature as a sharp break. The process of human maturation is naturally smooth and gradual, and the naturally matured individual differs from a child only in the extent of his knowledge, the subtlety of his perceptions, and his greater physical strength, coordination and patience.

II

In most societies that have developed beyond the level of simple hunting or agriculture, there exists a differentiation of the status of individuals in terms of social power, prestige, and consequently, in many instances, of economic privilege. The concept of status differentiation can arise in a society in a number of ways: from religion, as in Polynesia and certain African kingdoms; as a result of the conquest and subjugation of one group by another; or simply from the growth of distinctions between different occupational groups within a society. Even within a simple equalitarian society, like the Andaman Islanders or the Plains Indians, status differentiation, on the basis of age and achievement may occur. Once a system of status has been established, in whatever manner, it develops a life of its own, and persists with extraordinary tenacity from one generation to the next.

The ascription of higher status to adults than to children possesses a certain elementary logic especially within the framework of primitive economics, where success in the quest for food depends on a fairly high degree of coordination and experience. However, even this natural basis for differentiation tends to produce unfortunate psychological consequences. It gives rise to a continual pressure on the younger members of the community to grow out of their inferior status as quickly as possible and to regard everything associated with that status as contemptible and unworthy. Where the rise in status is directly linked with physical maturation, and the achievement of higher status is virtually automatic once one reaches a certain level of physical prowess, this emphasis is not entirely harmful, although the emphasis on status achievement

frequently tends to speed up the process of social maturation until it is out of harmony with its physical basis, and rush the individual into adult status before he is really ready for it—thus giving rise to unnecessary anxieties and tensions. But when advancement in status is not directly a consequence of maturation, and where, as in most class societies, the achievement of adult status does not present the individual with a wider range of possible activity, but the reverse, its psychological consequences are thoroughly deplorable.

For the lower levels of status in a class society, the amount of advancement possible is usually very little—practically speaking, the only certain way the unprivileged individual can advance himself in status is by growing up. In a class society, advancement in status is almost invariably one of the major preoccupations of the people, so the pressure on children, both internal and external, to relinquish their 'inferior' childlike ways and become adults is enormous, even when there is no immediate economic need for it.

Unfortunately, however, adult status in a class society permits greater scope for the individual's potentialities only in the realm of sexual adventures. In virtually every other respect, he is much more circumscribed than he was as a child, both by the pressure of economic necessity and that of social taboos. Especially on the lower levels of status, adulthood is defined in largely negative terms—the things one can no longer do without losing face are many, while the number of things he can now do that he was prevented from doing as a child is fairly negligible. He is free to take a job—in fact compelled to—but the possibility of exercising his faculties in his work is infinitesimal in comparison with the creative outlets that even a slum-child possesses, and he is strongly discouraged from doing anything creative when he is not working, by the fear of being considered childish.

The lower one goes in the social hierarchy, the earlier the age of social maturity manifests itself. On the bottom, where the ONLY social advance is from childhood to 'maturity', boys in their early teens are already scornful of childishness and arbitrarily limit their play to such 'adult' pastimes as smoking, drinking, gambling and fornicating.

In the higher levels of the hierarchy, the pressure on children to grow up is somewhat less intense. Childhood lasts somewhat longer, and the transition is more gradual, but the process is not remarkably different and the end-result is almost as limited and

anti-war agitation, and in any case, the agitation that was used as evidence in the trial had occurred before this country entered the war. Since Pearl Harbor, there has been quite literally not a single case of radical anti-war activity on a scale to invite government repression. The one effort that was made to stop the war—the Peace Now Movement—a courageous and in many ways admirable beginning, was essentially liberal in its orientation, not going beyond urging its adherents to write to their congressmen, but the frenzied haste with which the radicals, including even some avowed pacifists, repudiated this organization, once the more venomous of the bourgeois newspapers began to smear it, reflected no credit on the quality of their radicalism. Some of the criticisms leveled against Peace Now were unquestionably justified—its standards for admitting members were too haphazard, its efforts to enlist the support of conservative politicians were opportunistic and naive, and its program was too vague and ineffectual to promise much hope of success. But such criticism could only be made honestly if the critics were themselves making a similar attempt on a sounder and more principled basis. As a matter of fact, however, these objections were raised primarily out of sheer fright at the prospect of being compromised by an organization which had the courage to stand up for the position which all radicals had always advocated—in peace-time—opposing the war in practice as well as in theory. Faced with this actual issue, their brave resolutions were forgotten and they ignominiously scuttled for cover behind a new-found sectarian purism that was both dishonest and disingenuous.

II

Pro-war radicals (or rather ex-radicals, since it is absurd to consider anyone a radical* while he is supporting, however critically,

* The words 'socialist' and 'radical' are frequently used as though they were synonyms. I do not believe that this is altogether accurate, if we accord to the words their common meanings, and do not try to fit the definitions to our own ideas. A socialist, broadly speaking, is anyone who advocates common ownership of the means of production (although there is considerable disagreement among socialists of different schools, as to which social unit should be vested with ownership: opinion on this question ranges all the way from the village community to the Total State.) A radical is simply one who believes that fundamental changes in the social system are necessary. At the present time, I think it is quite safe to say that nearly all radicals are socialists of one sort or another, but many socialists are not, and indeed never have been, radicals. Those socialists who believe that socialism can be achieved legally, by electing a majority in the legislative branch of the government, and then passing constitutional amendments, legislating socialism into being, are not radicals but liberals: they do not advocate fundamental social change, but a New Deal within the framework of existing institutions. Similarly, those socialists who uphold the rulers of the Russian State are conservatives rather than radicals, since they seldom advocate anything but the retention of the status quo in Russia.

circumscribed.

The desire for play is considerably stronger than any efforts that can be made to destroy it by social pressure, but when it is prevented from manifesting itself naturally and spontaneously it tends to become furtive and twisted. Adult play, in a class society, except for the few fields which are denied to children—chiefly sex and the indulgence in strong drink—must disguise itself as useful work in order to be socially acceptable. In most pre-capitalist class societies, the arts are identified with religion; dancing, the plastic art, music and poetry all tend to become incorporated into the religious rituals of the society, and thus become worthy occupation for adults.

In capitalist society, since religion has declined in importance, other justifications must be found. For the majority of adults, virtually the only socially sanctioned form of play is attending spectacles. These are usually disguised as business transactions by charging admission; the performers, since they are paid for practising their art, are, according to the peculiar logic of capitalism, workers, and therefore responsible members of society—baseball players, band leaders and musicians, movie actors are all workers. Card-playing, which is one of the few other kinds of play that a 'responsible' adult may indulge in, must also be done for money, thus conveying the illusion that it is a form of business enterprise.

Under capitalism, work is broadly defined as any activity that can command a price on the market. It can be no more than time spent sitting around and doing nothing at all—not even watching or waiting for something to happen that requires attention. Thus, during the late war it was a not uncommon practice for factories working on government contracts to hire more men than they could use and pay the extra ones wages without giving them anything to do, since they were paid for their services to the government in proportion to the number of men they employed. These men, although conspicuously idle, were considered workers. They had to report for 'work' every day and remain on the premises until quitting time, just as if there was something for them to do. This is a rather extreme example, but the same basic idea is present in all jobs under capitalism. The activity can be entirely meaningless, but it is work if it is paid for.

Under capitalism, therefore, art is considered work when it is saleable, either as a commodity—a painting, for instance—or as a

EDITORIALS

Spring, 1945

LEFT ABOUT-FACE: RADICALS AND THE WAR.

During the First World War, Randolph Bourne and other advanced thinkers who had managed to retain their sanity, found occasion to denounce the behavior of the liberals. In the Second World War, the antics of the liberals have been even worse, if that is possible, than they were last time, and, in addition, the majority of the radicals have thoroughly disgraced themselves. The record of American radicals during the last war was, on the whole, far more principled and courageous than that of their European counterparts. The actions of Debs and many of his followers, of the IWW and the Anarchists, notably Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, stood in sharp contrast to the spineless capitulation of the major radical parties of the Old World, and the renegacy of such outstanding figures as Kropotkin, Herve and Kautsky. This is not to say that all European radicals lacked integrity during that war, but certainly the number of capitulators made up a much larger percentage of the total membership than in this country.

In the present war, the European radicals have largely repeated their performance of last time, and the Americans have not been far behind. A considerable number of both organized and unaffiliated radicals have supported the war, and among those groups which have withheld their formal support, there has been no anti-war activity worth mentioning. There have been a number of radicals of military age who have preferred prison to the army, but those who have gone into the army are far more numerous. And the behavior of the so-called anti-war radicals in general has been extremely timid and restrained, so much so, in fact, that the government has apparently decided that it has nothing to fear from them and has left them almost entirely alone. The one prosecution of any magnitude — the Minneapolis Teamsters Union case — was more the result of an intra-union political quarrel than of

skill. An artist who cannot sell his art is not considered a full adult, unless, as sometimes happens, he is retroactively converted into a worker by finding a market for his hitherto worthless products. This phenomenon is frequently to be observed in the fate of the paintings of a so-called primitive painter, who paints as a hobby, with no thought of the market—and is generally considered a crazy eccentric by his neighbors—then they chance to fall into the hands of a professional art dealer and are sold by him for fabulous prices.

Those artists whose art is not saleable, but who for one reason or another persist in it—refusing to acquiesce in the socially accepted definition of worker—are in a difficult position in the matter of status. They are, in the main, jeered at as childish, and since only a very strong person can withstand this kind of pressure without being affected by it in some way, most of them tend to work out various rationalizations for their art, which, while they rarely satisfy the more 'responsible' members of the community, at least afford the artists themselves a partial relief from feelings of guilt.

These rationalizations fall into two broad categories. Both of them are clearly derived from the association of art with religion in most pre-capitalist societies, but they have both been somewhat secularized, and they are bitterly antagonistic to each other.

The first category defines art in rather mystical terms, as an exalted profession, and considers the artist to be a sort of consecrated person, whose values and accomplishments are too refined to be appreciated by the vulgar, philistine majority. This group looks on commercial success as unworthy of the 'true' values of the artist, and to disparage those artists whose art is saleable—although they seldom refuse to sell their own, if and when an opportunity presents itself.

The other category considers the artist a sort of evangelist in the cause of the oppressed, whose function is to create propaganda for the revolution. Formerly confined to a handful of radical philosophers, this view has been coming into its own during the past twenty years, and has become the official State doctrine in Russia. While it is as emphatic in its repudiation of commercial success as is the first category, it rejects it not from an elevated esthetic evaluation, but because it is counter-revolutionary; in fact, it tends to lump the artists of the first category with those who work for the market, since they are not particularly concerned about

doubt their own ability at the same time to govern and to retain any following among the people. Every indication shows that, for at least a decade, the Labour Party will be eclipsed by a triumphant Toryism. So far as the workers are concerned, I do not imagine the result will make much difference either way.

This is indeed a gloomy picture. But it is only if we take a completely realistic attitude towards political situations, and if we realize the strength of the forces against us, that we can really progress towards our ends. The major weakness of revolutionaries in the past has been their own unbounded optimism. In England today there is little reason for optimism, particularly concerning the immediate future.

January, 1945

These are difficult times for a radical journal, but we believe we are making headway and that in the future we will be able to present a still wider range of contributors. We believe that we have been faithful to our editorial aims, and want to thank those whose letters of encouragement have made us feel that we were not alone in this opinion.

this might, of course, be changed by the emergence of an influential libertarian movement on the Continent. On the whole, however, I think that the ruling class has used the war to establish itself in a position where it will be virtually impregnable until a major economic crisis happens some years after the war. In spite of clumsy actions in recent months, the British ruling class remains the most cunning in the world, and is certain to continue its methods of educational and political conditioning coupled with economic bribery of the Beveridge type. On the old principle of 'divide and rule', any popular feeling that remains will be drawn off into the innocuous combat of party warfare between the two sections of the ruling class.

That a real struggle of interest does exist between the Tories and the Labour bureaucrats is undoubted. But it is a struggle for personal interests, in which the interests of the people are remote and secondary objects. Now, when the war *may* be over within a year, both parties are maneuvering into strategic positions for the post-war election struggle. So far, the Labour Party has acted with incompetent clumsiness and the Tories with a tactical subtlety which shows that the old capitalist ruling class is by no means so decadent as we had fondly imagined. Early in the war, the Tories prepared for their own future by appointing the Labour leaders, Bevin and Morrison, to the ministries whose operations would arouse the greatest resentment among the people. Then, having pretended to be cold over the Beveridge plan, they induced the Labour Party to adopt it as a basis for social security proposals, and in the end took the wind from the Labour sails by bringing forward a Churchillian social security scheme which in some respects was even better than Beveridge. Their great strategy, however, lies in the field of controls. The Labour Party, whose idea of socialism is little more than modified capitalism plus an enormous bureaucratic scheme of regulation, has talked glibly and foolishly of the need for maintaining controls after the war. The Tories, however, have realized that the people are completely tired of controls, and they are already preparing to launch a pseudo-libertarian programme, as the party who will abolish wartime restrictions. On such a programme they will win the elections hands down, unless in the meantime they commit some really fatal blunder. They will also be assisted by the half-conscious willingness of the Labour leaders to be defeated, because they

the fate of the masses.

Those artists whose rationalization falls in the first category are at least not necessarily prevented by it from following their own inclinations—although the very esoteric character of their approach tends to promote cliquism—and in some cases are able to create in almost complete freedom from pressure of an esthetic nature. The second category, however, naturally tends to dogmatism and rigidity—frequently exceeding the commercial standards in inflexibility and coerciveness.

The plight of the artist in capitalist society is thus far from enviable. If he is to practice his profession at all, he is faced by three almost equally unenticing alternatives: He can accept the values of the system and work with an eye to the market—which means that he must turn out the sort of work that is marketable, regardless of his personal taste or inclination. This kind of art is seldom more satisfying than any other job in a capitalist enterprise. Secondly, he can join the self-conscious esthetes, where he will at least be permitted a certain amount of freedom to follow his own bent, but at the price of being despised by the majority, economically insecure, and, to some extent subject to the dicta of cults. In the third place, he can put himself into the hands of the self-appointed art-commissars, and dedicate his art to the cause of the oppressed. This means, in practice, that he must conform to the judgments of the commissars and curb his impulses almost as if he were working for the market.

In none of these three categories is the artist really free. When he repudiates the socially accepted concept of his role, he is still influenced by it to the extent that he accepts the premise that his art is a form of useful work and as such must be measured by a more or less fixed standard of acceptability, and is tormented by the fear that his art will be found wanting by whatever critics whose judgment he respects. Only a relative handful of spontaneous artists, who give no thought to any standards but their own satisfaction, can be said to function in the realm of pure art. They pursue their medium with the same lack of concern for external pressure that is characteristic of small children. In short, before the arts can become free, they must first be liberated from the idea that they are 'useful' in the sense that, say, carpentry is useful, and be considered from the standpoint of psychological criteria that are appropriate to their function.

III

It is necessary, before we can draw any conclusions about the relative value of play and useful work, to define precisely what we mean by useful work. Clearly the capitalistic definition is of no value to us, since it not only takes in far too much territory, but is based on a criterion that is only very remotely connected with genuine utility. The mere fact that something can be sold tells nothing of its actual value, as it is well known that there are plenty of people in existing society who can be induced to buy anything at all, or to part with their money for nothing.

Most concepts of utility that go beyond the simple capitalist definition still tend to be influenced by it to some extent. They usually define anything that goes to make up the standard of living of a middle-class family as useful—an entirely arbitrary procedure. From a strictly biological standpoint, the only work that can properly be considered useful is that which provides for actual bodily requirements—food, shelter. Since it is possible for man to remain healthy on a level not appreciably higher than the general living standard of other domestic animals, genuinely useful work clearly requires but a very small amount of time—even with quite primitive methods of production. All else, biologically speaking, is luxury—including privacy, more than a simple balanced diet, artificial light and practically everything else that is part of 'civilized living'.

The desire for more than a bare subsistence is virtually a universal phenomenon in human society, of course, but so is the desire for play. It is absurd to consider that luxury is any more important than play, or that the production of items of luxury is any more meaningful than playing. It is even highly probable that the desire for more than a few modest luxuries is a form of compensation for the frustration of the play impulse or some other instinct when it is not simply a product of the requirements of status achievement—higher status being frequently indicated by an increase in material possessions.

In a society where there is no status stratification and thus no pressure on the individual to attempt to rise in the social hierarchy, the sharp distinction between children and adults that exists in status societies—and consequently the deprecating of play in favor of 'useful' activity—is not drawn. There may be, especially in difficult economic conditions, such as prevail among the Eskimos, for example, a purely economic pressure on everyone to contribute

the police have been persecuting the Anarchists, Trotskyists and other objectors to social slavery. So far their efforts have been clumsily executed, and have only resulted in wider publicity for the movements concerned.

There is little real revolutionary feeling among the people, and large-scale demonstrations of popular discontent, such as strikes, have been considerably less formidable than many of the party-line revolutionaries maintain. They have been considerably smaller than at a comparable stage in the last war, and so far, except for the pitmen's strike in South Wales, have affected only a fraction of the war workers.

I fear all this seems gloomy, but I find in general among organized revolutionary groups an uncritical optimism and an inflated sense of their own importance which usually gives an unrealistic tone to their assessments of the state of mind of the workers, and often results in downright dishonesty in their propaganda.

The English workers in general have no revolutionary knowledge, and the traditions of the Owenites has long died out in the sleepy century of national education and parliamentary politics. They have endured probably a longer period of political conditioning than any other race, and so far they show few signs of discarding their political lethargy. Many of them have become disillusioned with the political party game, but so far very few of them have gone beyond apathy. They realize that politics today is a crooked game, but this results only in an attitude of leaving it to the politicians and attending to their own business. Even such scandalous events as the betrayal of the Warsaw rising and the British intervention in Greece, which fifty years ago would have roused a storm of popular indignation, have evoked scarcely a ripple of response from the mass of the people. A great decline has taken place recently in the sales of every kind of political book and pamphlet. But there is no positive realization that the institutions of political coercion are evil in themselves and can be dispensed with.

I do not think there is any likelihood of a spontaneous social revolution in this country in a measurable space of time, and even if some form of widespread popular demonstration of anger takes place, I fear that the people are politically so naive that they will allow themselves to be led by authoritarian adventurers, either Communist or neo-Fascist (perhaps a successful military hero). All

But most of the people would have endured a lean Christmas, if they could have had some kind of assurance of an early end of the war. Late in the summer no-one doubted that the war would be over very soon. Most people thought October a likely date—only the most pessimistic mentioned December. The government spokesmen and the military brasshats encouraged these beliefs by their own optimistic statements. This proved a very bad tactical line. Accompanied by relaxation of blackout and fireguard duties and the abolition of the Home Guard, it at first succeeded in placating the growing discontent, but when the military results failed to justify the hopefulness of the people, they became very cynical and disgruntled. Never, since 1939, have so many people been so completely tired of the war. Even those with the soft jobs are finding the nervous strain too great to carry on comfortably, and the flying bombs have done more than any quantity of anti-war propaganda could have achieved. "The war's been on too bloody long!" is a remark one hears everywhere, and now that the hopes of an early end are gone, there is no limit to the pessimism of the Jeremiahs, a pessimism largely justified by the unexpected demonstration of German strength in Belgium, and the large new call-ups in this country. On-one, of course, expects a German victory, but the end of the war is regarded as a good long way off.

Discontent, of a kind, is almost universal. There is much grumbling, but very few people do anything about their annoyance. The Labour Party, the Communists and the Trade Unions are useless as organs of popular anger—they have sold out to the government and survive as little more than state auxiliaries for disciplining the workers and keeping them loyal to the government 'line'. The remaining left-wing organizations, political and non-political, are little more than nuclei, and for the most part, have must less influence than they claim. A few small papers, and a few groups of individuals, anarchist, pacifist, and left-socialist, maintain a steady opposition to the war and provide relatively honest social criticism. They often give themselves pretentious names, but their influence is little more than potential. In the right circumstances they *might* wield an influence completely disproportionate to their numbers and affect radically the course of political events.

This possibility the government appears to realize, for lately

as much as possible to the food supply but this does not make for condescension toward children or a rigid differentiation between the roles of children and adults. On the contrary, the two roles tend to merge imperceptibly into one another. Children are treated with respect, as responsible members of the community, as soon as they can walk; their wishes and opinions are considered as seriously as those of anyone else. Likewise, in such a society, play is regarded as natural for everyone, whenever the immediate pressure of the environment permits. In non-status societies, like the Pueblo Indians, where the demands of the food quest are somewhat less severe, the amount of time devoted to non-utilitarian pursuits—decorating pots, story-telling—is at least as great as that consumed by practical work; and since even very small children perform some kind of useful function, the distinction between children and adults can hardly be said to exist. Everyone works, according to his capacity, when there is work to do, and everyone plays the rest of the time.

It seems to me that any really free society would be like this. Children would be encouraged to enter the workshops and participate in whatever work was going on, according to their capacity. However, since the major emphasis of the society would not be on production for its own sake, everyone would be free to devote a considerable part of their time to playful pursuits.

It is argued by some that in a society where man is free to pick his occupation without compulsion and to determine his own hours and working conditions, useful work would be sufficiently satisfying and enjoyable to take care of all creative needs. This argument, however, seems to me self-defeating, since if everyone were to devote his spare time to 'useful' work, so much stuff would be produced that it could no longer be considered useful. I can't imagine why an oversupply of clothes, food, houses and the like would provide greater satisfaction than if the surplus time was devoted to playful pursuits like art.

Moreover, there seems to be some factor in the makeup of humanity, to say nothing of other animals, which rebels against an excessive concentration of 'practical' activities, perhaps because these activities are, of necessity, too stereotyped to permit sufficient scope to individual ingenuity and caprice. The ways of performing practical tasks are rigidly limited by the end to be achieved, whereas in the arts it does not really matter what one does—the the work is an end in itself, and need meet no tests of durability, balance or form,

unless its creator arbitrarily so decides. Each practising artist determines for himself the rules he intends to follow and the effects he wants to achieve, and the success or failure of his achievement is ultimately a matter for him alone to decide.

Individual contributions naturally vary considerably, depending on the amount of time, emotional intensity and energy each individual devotes to his particular art form. However, whether or not certain individuals possess a natural superiority in their special field it is impossible to determine, since the criteria that can be used to judge such superiority are invariably too vague and subjective. It is fairly simple to set up standards to grade the skill of individuals in practical work, since there is general agreement about the ends to be achieved in such work. But in the arts, everyone can legitimately claim that he is attempting something entirely unique, and therefore his work cannot be measured by existing standards. The advantage of this from the standpoint of ego security is enormous.

The rules of art can best be viewed as the rules of a game—a game that is played by each artist alone—which are capable of infinite variation. A group of artists in a particular field may agree among themselves to follow the same set of rules, but any one of them is always free to break with them if he wants to, and set up new rules for himself. Why then, should there be any rules at all? Why not adopt the simple principle that art is the free expression of the individual and disregard technical questions?

For those whose minds are sufficiently simple to be satisfied with sheer self-expression, obviously this principle is adequate; there are plenty of practising artists who could be cited as examples—artists to whom technique is of no importance, who approach art almost as small children do. But in most cases the human mind is too complex an organ to be content with such simple rules of the game—a fact which can be observed even in the art of children who have passed the age of five or six.

The human intellect is so constructed that it likes to solve problems, and when it is not confronted with enough problems in its daily experience, it tends to set up arbitrary ones and solve THEM. This tendency is not infrequently deplored as decadent and precious by those simple souls who are content with the raw outpourings of their psyches, but this seems to me an unwarranted assumption. Man, throughout the past several hundred thousand

LONDON LETTER TO RETORT

Spring, 1945

GEORGE WOODCOCK

Christmas has passed in an atmosphere of gloom and justified pessimism. The sudden change of events on the Belgian front—which seems to have extended the war by several months—and the periodic clatter of bombs falling somewhere in the vicinity of London, have made it the most uneasy Christmas since 1940. And, so far as Christmas comforts were concerned, it was the least abundant since the war started. Toys were shoddier and dearer than ever. Drink, when one could get it, was from ten to twenty times the peacetime prices. And, in London at least, it was only by the use of good lines of influence that one could procure any appreciable amount of food outside the official portions of rationed goods.

A visit in Christmas week to the Welsh Marches, a district fairly remote from London and moderately inaccessible except by car, gave me some idea of the contrast which exists, after five years of war, between town and country in England. There, in the small Elizabethan towns, I saw geese, ducks, chickens, pigeons, hanging in the shops to be bought freely by all comers. The fish shops were full of sole and plaice, the bakers' shops of mince pies and Christmas cake, the hardware stores still had large stocks of enamel ware, rubber cushions, oil stoves, commodities which in London have become almost as rare as the Great Auk. I mention these facts for two reasons. Firstly, they demonstrate the low level of varied living for the ordinary town dweller and the astonishment he experiences in encountering anything like a pre-war variety of food and other commodities. Secondly, they show to an extent the resilience and resourcefulness of a rural as distinct from an urban economy. I do not bring this up as a romantic plea for a return to the land, but merely as a point in favor of a more balanced integration of town and country life.

illnesses etc., whenever they can. This program has been criticized by some because it is not sufficiently constructive; it does not offer any method for improving society, but only provides a possible escape for *individuals*. This criticism seems to me absurd. It has been the practice in radical circles entirely too long to deprecate individual action, and maintain that only 'mass' action is worth bothering with, a viewpoint that has its origin in the seizure-of-power complex that has dominated left-wing thinking for the past few decades. It is quite apparent that Comfort, like many other radicals today, does not see any possibility of improving society in the near future, but rather than retire from all activity, as so many of the others have done, he has worked out a concrete approach that is capable of being put into practice under the Total State. The best program in the world needs living men to carry it out, and until it is possible to act in a more constructive manner, survival is of paramount importance, a fact that too many leftists tend to overlook. Comfort's program might be open to serious criticism if it was nothing but a way of escaping, regardless of the means to be employed, but since he clearly indicates the importance of maintaining resistance to authority, and responsibility towards other individuals—as individuals—it could serve as the basis for a new and morally sounder radical movement. As Don Benedetto says to Spina in Silone's *Bread and Wine*: "One must respect time. Every season has its own work. There is the season for pruning the vines, the season for spraying them, the season for preparing the barrels, the season for gathering and pressing the grapes. If in spring, when the vines are being tied to the stakes, some one passes by and says; 'It is not worthwhile doing that, because if the barrels are bad the wine will be spoiled; the first thing to do is to attend to the barrels,' you can answer him and say, 'Every season has its own work. This is not the season for cleaning out the barrels, but for pruning the vines and tying them to the stakes. Let me therefore remove the useless branches from the vines . . .'" While Comfort perhaps leans a trifle over backwards in opposing the concept of 'mass' action, he is making a valuable contribution to radical thought in his insistence on the fact that the individual is the end of all social advance, and that to sacrifice individuals for the sake of some 'higher' good destroys the whole basis for the struggle for a good life.

H.R.C.Jr.

years, and his simian ancestors for countless millennia before that, have been constantly confronted by problems which they had to solve in order to survive. Therefore, it seems natural enough that the ability and desire to solve problems should have become part of the psychological heritage of humanity—a faculty which may ultimately be no longer particularly necessary for survival but which is still certainly of the greatest importance. Since this faculty exists, it is also natural that it should be used, and if the daily environment does not present enough difficulties to exercise it properly, as I passionately hope will someday be the case for everyone, it must be exercised in some arbitrary way, just as individuals who lead a sedentary existence require more or less arbitrary physical exercise in order to be healthy.

It is one of the primary errors of the nature-fetishers to assume that the mind and its faculties are not part of nature, but a peculiar excrescence grafted onto man by civilization, which will wither away once the Good Life has been achieved. Man is an animal, of course, but he differs from all other species primarily in the size and complexity of his brain, which is just as much a part of his natural endowment as the powerful legs of the horse or the sensitive nose of a dog are part of theirs. It is certainly a serious misunderstanding of the Darwinian hypothesis to assume that if and when a natural faculty is no longer absolutely necessary for survival (a condition which is clearly a long way from being fulfilled in the case of the human mind) it tends to disappear. The theory of survival simply indicates that those who possess the qualities necessary for survival will survive; there is no natural mechanism for eliminating unnecessary qualities unless they are actually detrimental to survival.

It might be considered that identifying the arts as play robs them of all dignity and significance. In my opinion, the exact opposite is the case. The forced attempt to make art into a species of useful work has only subordinated it to either church, the state, or business, unless it was prepared to live a hole-in-corner existence, despised by the majority—who instinctively recognize its playful character, but are prevented from accepting it for reasons of status. If the play impulse is recognized for what it is—one of the fundamental needs of mankind—art is not depreciated but truly liberated when it is understood as a manifestation of this impulse.

MR KATZ, MR COHEN AND COSMOLOGY

June, 1942

S. G. BELLOW

Consider the world of Mr. Katz, a self-educated man. It is formed upon notions—as in every case it must be—that are altogether his own and cannot be understood by others. Its divisions, forms, climates, the alignment of its cities, its mountains, its place as a subordinate beside the sun, correspond to a most widely accepted picture; yet the differences in general shape and in distances would strike many of us as arbitrary inventions, and if he could render them all exactly as he sees them, we who are used to bright, rounded hemispheres (blue for ocean, thick red for mountains, green for forests) might be led to compare him in vision to, say, Magellan, with his foreshortened, oblong continents and disproportionate seas.

But perhaps if we could render the world to each other the results, between us, would be nearly as strange, for who can vouch for any reality so much greater than one's self? Mr. Katz has taught himself his version from a few meagre and badly printed books and from selected examples furnished by his life which has been an odd one even outwardly. The year is 1922; Mr. Katz left Amsterdam in 1918, Warsaw in 1914. He has learned the trade of diamond cutter but here in Montreal he is a clothing cutter. He has travelled, then. He has seen ocean, volcanic rock, great cities: he has read about crystals and the development of life and is well aware of different views of the universe, such as that of the Chinese, or that of the Polynesians who envisage man between seas of air and seas of water, their pantheon extending through both. He is tolerant of these, being, in his way, a sophisticated man who in terms of what he knows has worked out a personal system equal in rich complexities to any.

He is respected in the boarding house where he lives, though some ill-natured fun is made of his red hair, his huge nose, his

RETORT

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At the present time, since organizations are all-powerful, the only hope for the individual is to try to escape, by devious stratagems, from the demands of citizenship. To avoid being killed, which is his first duty as an individual, he must sometimes acquiesce outwardly, but in so doing he is very careful to keep himself from being submerged, and accepting the values of the citizen. He is always on the lookout for a way to escape, and he resists, whenever he can do it without unduly risking his life or causing injury to others: "... every woman who hides a deserter, every clerk who doesn't scrutinize a pass, every worker who bungles a fuse, saves somebody's life for a while. . . ." The supreme delusion of the citizen is that it is possible to do good by harming others: "There's a crime being committed . . . 'Act up to your principles', whisper the thimbliggers and prompters. You rush to help—every step you take crushes an innocent person—before you reach your objective, you are drenched in blood, and by now that objective has been skillfully moved out of reach. Never mind, they show you another— . . . There is only one responsibility—to the individual who lies under your own feet."

Comfort has selected many incidents to illustrate his principles, with special emphasis on the futility of trying to do good by injuring others. It is a violent book, and death by violence plays an important part in it, but despite the fact that there is no display of moral indignation, one is left with a strong feeling that nothing of any value can be accomplished by violence. Thus when a group of underground workers undertake to blow up a German troop-train, in retaliation for the shooting of hostages, they only succeed in destroying a train filled with French civilians, killing a large number of them, and incidentally lose their ring-leader to the Gestapo in the process. One might cavil that sabotage is not necessarily so wide of the mark, but cannot escape the conclusion that disasters like this are all too frequently the consequence of accepting such tactics. Similarly, an abortive uprising in a slave-labor camp accomplishes nothing but the killing of a handful of German common soldiers and the capture of all the rebels by the authorities, who have every intention of making an example of them.

The characters who represent Comfort's own viewpoint adopt, on the whole, a policy of artful dodging—yielding to the system when it cannot be avoided, but getting out of difficulties by faking

BOOKS

Spring, 1945

THE POWER HOUSE by Alex Comfort. Viking. \$3.00.

In these days, when the publishing industry is prostituting itself to the War-Effort, throwing overboard its esthetic and intellectual standards in the interests of patriotism, it is not a little surprising, and very gratifying, to discover that a book like *THE POWER HOUSE*, which is uncompromisingly opposed to war and all forms of government, can still be published.

THE POWER HOUSE is laid in France, during the period from about a year before the war to the summer of 1941. The characters are all either Frenchmen or German soldiers, and represent a wide range of types and classes, including a collaboratorist textile manufacturer, Gestapo agents, intellectuals, and several different categories of manual workers. A large part of the book—perhaps too large a part—is taken up with fairly technical descriptions of men at work. Comfort seems to know a great deal about machinery, and he writes about machines in motion imaginatively and dramatically, but I felt that he would have demonstrated the dominant position of the machine in modern life just as clearly without quite so many examples. The war sections, especially the retreat of the French army, are wonderfully handled. The atmosphere of chaos, disintegration and frustration that he creates is even more compelling than such first-hand accounts as Malaquais' *WAR DIARY*.

Comfort is a young English anarchist of the individualist school. His philosophy, as it emerges from *THE POWER HOUSE*, where it is expounded, in slightly different versions by several characters, is something like this: Man, as an individual, is rational and decent, but when he becomes part of an organization—the army, a political party, or whatever—he ceases to be an individual, and becomes a citizen—an unthinking automaton, whose actions, though ostensibly directed towards a good end, are irrational and destructive.

lank awkwardness. His landlady, Mrs. Weiman, defends him, his steady habits, his promptness in paying, and if she has any criticism it is of his untidiness. He brings stones, twigs, leaves, butterflies into his room, and so many papers and magazines it is hard to clean. Her two young sons go there to explore when the door is left unlocked.

"A-sigh-a," the younger one reads slowly from a magazine on the unmade bed.

"AY-zha, you fool," says his brother. "Can't you read?"

"Ayzhal"

"It's a place. It's on the other side of the world."

They turn their attention to other things, to the pebbles on his table, the box of chessmen, the horn handled razor, the enormous slippers overturned on the green carpet, and finally to his opera glasses which hang from the bedpost. Hesitant and apprehensive they lift the top of the case and look in and are surprised by the servant, Agatha.

"I'm going to tell your mother. Just wait till I tell her."

They run from the room in fright, the older one later to dwell on the razor and Agatha's meanness, the younger one to struggle with a nebulous Asia whose coasts, islands, waters, are to waver, form and reform themselves in a thousand stages in years to come.

And now, briefly, the world of Mr. Cohen, a tailor who also boards at Weiman's and is, by the way, a friend of Katz's and his chess partner. He is thirty years his senior, stout and robust, with a rather Socratic head, a pink scalp under his few remaining white curls. The world of Mr. Cohen is unbelievably simple, mainly because he has given it so little thought and has been willing to accept without question the facts (more rumors than facts) acquired in childhood and later, as an apprentice, a workman, a fugitive. Even its simplicity is not consistent. There are large areas unaccounted for; obvious contradictions lie side by side unresolved; he has no idea of space, distance, proportion, and is in complete ignorance of some of the most elementary facts; does not know the names of all the oceans and is not even aware of the existence of some of the larger ones, such as the Pacific. He does not know what lies to the north or to the south except, dimly, New York and Hudson Bay, the one because his sister lives there, the other because he has heard it mentioned. And as for the

shape of the world he believes it to be flat. If it were round, he has reasoned with Katz, we would always be walking either uphill or downhill. Obviously it must be flat.

Mr. Katz, who is naturally enough slightly didactic and cannot stand such abuse of reality, tries to explain with the kindest patience what the nature of the world really is. But he does not believe he can change Cohen, an old man with settled ideas. And if he spends a great deal of time describing and redescribing the whole universe it is largely because he himself enjoys reconstructing it, rehearsing as it were what he knows about it and finding each time that his understanding is renewed.

This mid-October Sunday they are in the dining room. Dinner is done, the other boarders have left and only Mr. Katz and Mr. Cohen remain, smoking, slowly finishing their dessert of prunes while Agatha is clearing away the dishes, folding napkins into napkin rings, and Mrs. Weiman is brushing off the crumbs with a goose wing and listening to Mr. Katz (for she respects his learning and misses no opportunity to profit by it) as he explains the changes of the seasons.

"The world," he says, "is not exactly like a ball; it is flattened at both ends and it turns around the sun, which is ninety-three million miles distant. You must understand, however, that it is not constantly upright but dipped to one side and then to the other. If I had a dumpling and a stick I could show you. This will do." He illustrates with a napkin ring and a knife. The boys come in while the loose sphere slips on its axis.

"Can we go to the movies?" asks the younger one.

"Shh, you're interrupting," says Mrs. Weiman with a glance at Mr. Katz.

"There's a Wallace Reid picture."

"And a Hoot Gibson."

"It's too beautiful a day to go to the movies. Go outside."

Not satisfied with his materials Mr. Katz is drawing on the tablecloth. He draws the sun and several earths all in an ellipse.

"Can't we go?" pleads the older boy.

"Na, here," says Mr. Cohen. "A dime for you and a dime for you. Go, enjoy, have a good time."

"Mr. Cohen you're spoiling them. Well, don't you say thanks?"

"Thanks, Mr. Cohen," they say.

"Hurry up, or else you'll be late," says Mr. Cohen.

aspects of life, and would cease to exist without that control.

It is of the utmost importance that radicals, in their campaign against peacetime conscription, keep in mind that a victory on this issue will not mean that the struggle is over, but is merely a step in the long and painful reconquest of the right of the people to control their own destinies, free from supervision and domination by a powerful bureaucracy.

* * *

For comic relief on this serious question, there is the stand of the Socialist Workers Party. Unlike most other leftist parties, the Cannonites do not oppose military conscription without qualifications (the Communists and the Social-Democrats are both pro-conscription, but then neither of these can be considered leftist parties according to any plausible definition of leftism). The SWP is of course indignant at the prospect of Wall Street Prussianizing American Youth, but "all important problems of humanity will be solved eventually arms in hand; it would be stupid, therefore, on the part of labor to simply oppose compulsory military training. The working class must call for military training . . . under its own control instead of the control of Wall Street."

(The Militant, Dec. 16, 1944.) In other words, in order to be better prepared for the eventual revolutionary overthrow of Wall Street, the workers need military training. They must therefore demand that the Wall Street Government finance a program of military training under the control of the unions. Superficially, this might appear to be asking rather a lot of the Wall Street Government, but not if one understands the Marxist-Leninist approach. It is really just a tactic, designed to prove to the workers that the status quo is rotten. It works something like this. The workers are urged to fight for their own conscription program, a demand which should appeal to the average worker as eminently just and reasonable. The Wall Street Government, however, would never grant such a demand, so the workers, outraged at having their just demand refused, overthrow the government. Simple, isn't it? The only problem is to convince the workers that it is just—or for that matter sane—to demand that the government finance a program designed solely to facilitate its overthrow.

H.R.C., Jr.

be made to respond to moral appeals, thereby helping to perpetuate the myth of responsible government, are doing the cause of radicalism more harm than good. Moreover, narrowing the fight against state coercion to the single issue of conscription, and attempting to arouse public opinion on that issue alone is merely inviting the government to resort to subterfuge to achieve its ends. Let us not forget that public opinion in America was aroused against getting into war before Pearl Harbor, that the government, by means of a series of indirect maneuvers, designed, so we were told, to keep us out, succeeded in jockeying the country into such a position that it was nonetheless drawn in.

The fight against conscription can only be really effective if it is conducted as a fight against the state, since conscription is merely the most obvious expression of the government's drive to reduce all individuals to the status of pawns whose every action it can control. This drive is absolutely basic in all governmental thinking—it is to the bureaucrat what the desire for profit is to the capitalist. When government is weak, its repressive urge is confined to matters of petty detail, but when the state emerges as the strongest single force in society, as it is emerging today throughout the world, its desire to reduce everything to a fixed pattern finds full expression and pervades every aspect of life. Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany have shown how far an unrestricted government is capable of going in this direction, and should serve as a warning of the potentialities latent in government. To combat this monster is the first duty of all sincere radicals, and they cannot afford to ignore its full implications, and blind themselves with illusions about "legitimate state powers." The state must be resisted in all of its manifestations, because every increase in its powers, no matter how desirable it may appear on the surface, serves to strengthen its position in society, and therefore its threat to all civilized values. Recent radical thought has shown itself all too accommodating to the idea that freedom can be preserved by means of 'democratic controls' on an extended state apparatus: that the 'good' attributes of the total state—its efficiency and ability to plan—can be harnessed for the purpose of beneficent social reconstruction, and its menace to human rights negated by a few checks and balances. This seems dangerous nonsense to me, inasmuch as the efficiency and planning of totalitarianism are MADE POSSIBLE by its control over all

Mr. Katz draws a larger circle with the equator and both tropics and shows how we pass annually from one to the other. "I am only sorry," he concludes, "that I haven't got a few better ways to make it plain. But do you understand?"

"I understand," says Mr. Cohen. "I see what you mean."

He now suggests a game of chess, but Mr. Katz proposes a walk instead.

"It's beautiful out," Mrs. Weiman says. Some of the boarders are rocking in the parlor, others stand in the hall preparing to leave; Agatha at the sink is singing a Salvation Army song, and all over the house the air, smelling of the roast and after-dinner tobacco, eddies smokily at the shutters.

It is, as Mrs. Weiman has twice repeated, a beautiful day, clear, unmarked by a single cloud. Broad maple and red oak leaves float at their feet as they walk towards the Esplanade. They stop while a double file of French children marches from the black gates of a church; they stop again while Mr. Cohen greets an acquaintance.

Mr. Katz, standing aside, alone, exults in the purity of the day, takes it in with widened eyes and a tightened heart. The city burns from one end to the other for him. It is a day, he feels as Mr. Cohen shakes hands and tips his hat to the wife of his acquaintance.

Mr. Cohen is made happy by the day. His happiness, however, is in large measure the happiness of well-being and the relinquishing of his few sorrows. He appreciates the day but he cannot see in it the working out in exemplary clarity of those principles which give Mr. Katz his joy.

Their walk brings them from the Esplanade, where everyone Mr. Cohen knows in the city seems to be promenading, to a little wood near Outremort. There they sit and rest.

Mr. Katz is full of the physical history of his surroundings. He has read about it and thought about it even more, so that now when he picks up a piece of broken stone and begins to talk about it, about its age and meaning, he takes on a very special tone. He explains that it dates from the Laurentian period and that its antiquity cannot really be imagined. Millions and millions and millions of years. Granite. See how crisp it was when broken open; like rare cheese. But the quartz in it still shines. Mr. Cohen

touches it with a tentative finger.

"Millions, eh? It's that old," he muses.

"Long before there was any life," says Mr. Katz.

"What? No life? What do you mean no life?"

It takes Mr. Katz nearly an hour to make fully plain what he means. He has had these difficulties with Mr. Cohen before, and not only in trying to convince him of the roundness of the world. There was the time, for instance, when they had almost quarreled over mountains. Mr. Katz had been explaining the origin of mountains.

"The first mountains rose up," he had said, "as the result of the cooling of the earth. When it cooled it began to shrink and when it shrank the mountains started piling up. You follow? Now take a board and wet it and lay it in the sun. What happens? It warps, doesn't it? So, the mountains go up and then in time they are worn down again. Rain, wind, hot and cold, ice winter and summer if the mountain is high enough..."

"Ice, winter and summer?" Mr. Cohen had interrupted. "What are you talking about!"

"Yes, in the summer on high mountains there is ice. Snow too. You see, it's so cold up there. The higher you go the colder it gets, and so..."

"Excuse me, you don't know what you're talking about. If it's snow it's winter. How can there be snow on a mountain in the summer?"

"You excuse ME. I can show you pictures," Mr. Katz had answered. "There are mountains, plenty of them, with snow in the summer to this day. The Jungfrau in Switzerland, parts of the Himalayas, the Rockies..."

"Somebody is making a fool of you, my friend. Don't believe it. I've seen a bit of the world, too, I can tell you. I was in Kishinev in the days of Stolypin. I served in the Kavkaz. I wasn't born yesterday. It was cold in the mountains, sure; but in the summer the snow melted."

"Kavkaz isn't high enough. These mountains are fifteen thousand feet."

"Not high enough, he tells me. It's enough to make your eyes fall out of your head."

And then when Katz had persisted and given illustrations and run from his room with a handful of pictures, Mr. Cohen had grown angry. "Are you trying to make fun of me?" he had said. "You ought to be ashamed. A man already in my years deserves

according to his tribal ways, but must volunteer for outside labor in order to raise tax money. If this is not "requiring the individual to alter the vocational life enterprise which he has chosen... and embark on one the state may choose for him," I would like to know what it is.

"The state may legitimately decree a certain, relatively small, number of acts forbidden and prohibit people under penalty of law from doing these things." This also provides plenty of loopholes for the coercion of personality, the best known of which is the vagrancy law, whereby the state penalizes individuals for the 'offense' of having no means of support. Penal laws of this character have been frequently employed to provide forced labor for building roads, etc., and could easily be used to raise an army without the need of a conscription law.

"The state... may lay down conditions of employment," says Calhoun, and later he speaks of the "need for establishing incentives for socially desirable behavior, while leaving the choices themselves free from direct coercion," going on to mention a number of "non-coercive" techniques a collectivist state might employ to induce individuals to enter unpopular vocations. This approach, reflecting as it does the typical radical intellectual's mistrust of the worker, whom he feels it necessary to manipulate, like a donkey with a carrot, is certainly not very far removed from the attitude that "individuals may properly be considered means to political ends," and an unscrupulous government would have no difficulty in using such techniques to raise an army or to coerce individuals to do anything else it desired without having to resort to actual conscription. Simply making the conditions of employment in every field but the army very difficult for those individuals it wanted to 'volunteer' would be quite coercive enough for all practical purposes. The number of men who would accept starvation wages rather than go into the army is probably no greater than those who would refuse to accept conscription.

The 'moral capital' of freedom in this country has long ago been exhausted. The phrase about "inalienable rights" which Calhoun quotes from the Declaration of Independence has never been respected by the government, which has invariably acted in its own interests, and disregarded the welfare and wishes of the people whenever it was able to get away with it. Left-wing thinkers who persist in creating the impression that the government can

the thesis that conscription is fundamentally antagonistic to civil liberties and the rights of labor, but I believe he has badly confused the issue and greatly weakened his position by his insistence on distinguishing between conscription and other forms of state coercion in an academic and on the whole meaningless manner. Either to placate public opinion, or because he thinks of the state as a possible agency of social reconstruction and does not want it to be deprived of powers which may someday be utilized for 'good' purposes, he finds it necessary to draw a sharp moral distinction where at most there is only a difference of degree. Conscription, according to Calhoun, coerces the personality while other forms of government coercion do not. This formulation strikes me as naive and superficial, inasmuch as any form of state coercion can be and frequently is utilized for the purpose of coercing the personality. By creating the impression that this is not the case, Calhoun, in effect, is giving a kind of backhanded moral sanction to vagrancy laws, poll taxes, etc. Conscription, it is true, is an extreme example of state coercion, but it is not fundamentally different from other forms. The assumption that "individuals may properly be considered means to political ends," which Calhoun regards as peculiarly tied up with conscription, is actually the characteristic basis of all governmental thinking.

"All restrictions on property," says Calhoun, "... fall outside the question involved in the conscription issue. . . . The state may levy taxes as it sees fit. . . ." In other words, the power to tax cannot be employed to coerce the personality. This is ridiculous. Suppose, for example, the government, instead of passing a conscription law, were to require that all men reaching military age pay a huge cash indemnity unless they 'voluntarily' enlisted in the army. This may seem to be an arbitrary example, but as a matter of fact it is almost precisely the technique that is employed by British Imperialism in Africa and other colonial regions to persuade the natives to abandon their sinful heathen idleness and go to work in the mines and plantations of the master race. First, the power of taxation is established over a nominally independent tribe (by a complicated process, combining cajolery, threats and the liberal use of Quislings, which need not concern us here). Then a head tax is levied, and by degrees increased, until it is impossible for a man to continue to live

a little respect."

At the end of the hour Mr. Cohen appears to be convinced. He is little inclined to question Mr. Katz's description of a world without life. He has no conflicting notion of his own; he accepts it as a kind of tale. To him the chief wonder brought up by Katz's discussion is still Time, those millions of years; and when they have returned to the broad walk and are going back towards the Esplanade, he brings it up again. The wind has risen and it is beating up flames in the upper stories of the great yellow buildings and wrinkling the water in the pond around the stone eagle. Mr. Katz and Mr. Cohen button their coats. Mr. Katz's eyes are watering. The sun reddens.

There all kinds of time, Mr. Katz says; there is human duration and then astronomical time which has been caught nearly perfectly by ingenious machines. It is a subject of great interest to Mr. Katz. He tries to impress sidereal vastness on Mr. Cohen who only says: "To us it seems like a lot, but who are we?" Look at me, I'm more than sixty years old and it's almost time for me, but I don't feel as if I've even turned around. So what is it? And to who is it a lot, a year? Sneeze and wipe your nose and it's a year already."

Mr. Katz now realizes that Time is a subject on which the simplest cannot help being profound. What Mr. Cohen says is profoundly true; it strikes him that he has never thought personally enough about it. "What have my thirty-three years meant?" he asks himself, saddened. He notices how very grey Mr. Cohen is who is only thirty "sneezes" away.

They separate on Mount Royal Avenue. Mr. Cohen is going to visit friends. Mr. Katz returns to the boarding house alone. There is no supper served on Sunday. The boys are in the dining room drinking cocoa out of bowls and eating bread and butter. He hears them talking shrilly as he goes upstairs, arguing whether Hoot Gibson is quicker in a fight than Eddie Polo. He does not understand them. He is still wondering as he opens the window in his room why he never thought of Time in a more personal sense.

It turns out to be a fine night, easily the day's equal, solid with stars, a brilliant moon, crystalline, moving. Mr. Katz has shut

off the light and lies in a position no one would ever have expected to find him, with his shoes on the pillows and his chin at the foot of the bed. He is not as strong as he would like to be in stars; he frequently loses himself and mistakes the handle of the Little Dipper for Orion. He does not know the names of the Bear, the Twins, Arcturus. He has not been able to get a satisfactory book and he is eager to find someone to help him out. Meanwhile he has installed an order in the heavens of his own and he is sure of its correctness in essentials. The rest is a matter of detail.

He watches the stars as both he and they slip in ordained directions and tonight of all nights, because of his discussion with Cohen, he realizes sharply that however often he may see these changes, each, though it appears to be the same, is not the same but different, irrevocable. He lies still and hears his clock, the tread of the train on the Grand Trunk, hollow whistling on the corner. These too are a part of it, since they can never come again. He sees his life as pieces of cloth fed under the falling and again-falling needle of a machine. All of these, he thinks as he sets his alarm for six, are part of one apparatus. The train, the clock returned to the table in the night's center, the whistling, all are stitching shut long seams, drawing in—to close it forever—all of past life.

MAN LIVES NOT BY BREAD ALONE

...But it helps!

Our hard-working editor's ideals are his main driving force, but to be frank, if Retort is to go on, he's got to eat too. And that, literally, plus the cost of paper and ink, is all it takes to keep Retort going—no typesetter's bills, no printer's bills, no binder's bills, no office rent, no fleasports for business managers, treasurers, circulation managers, et al. Our Editor does all this himself, day in and day out, in his homemade printshop out on the hillside. We are willing to bet that no other magazine of Retort's size and scope has hit such rock-bottom operating costs.

There's a reason for this madness. Retort was conceived at a time when little mag after little mag was folding up—subscriptions falling off, backers backing out. We felt that somebody had to hold on; to care for the seed if there was to be another crop. But it was obvious that this could be done only if costs were kept far below what had been believed to be the minimum. We've done it, and can continue to do it, but we've got to have your help. Our Editor's tastes are simple. It shouldn't be hard to keep him clothed and fed. Contribute to the Sustenance Fund! Subscribe! Get your friends to subscribe!

RETORTING

Spring, 1945

CONSCRIPTION AND THE STATE

The campaign against post-war conscription is being prosecuted in the left-wing press with more enthusiasm than any issue has aroused since the Free India campaign of a few years back. Hardly a radical or pacifist publication has failed to take a stand on the question, and many of them are devoting considerable space to it. The issue is certainly a very important one, which well deserves the attention of all men of good will, but it might be relevant to inquire why, if conscription is as bad as its various opponents are demonstrating it is, with a very convincing display of evidence, they are not demanding its IMMEDIATE ABOLITION, instead of confining their opposition to conscription after the war is over.

While most of the arguments being used against conscription are reasonable and appropriate, there is a regrettable tendency for some leftists, carried away by their zeal for the campaign, to lose sight of the fact that the fight against conscription is only one aspect of the struggle for a better world, and to minimize equally serious threats to freedom, in order to make their case against conscription more acceptable to conservative public opinion. In some instances this has gone so far as to involve the use of arguments that are fundamentally out of harmony with the basic beliefs of their advocates. Certain pacifists, for example, have actually put themselves on record as opposing conscription because it is not an efficient way of raising an army. Such information, coming from such a source, is not likely to be taken seriously by anyone, and what is more important, it casts doubt on the seriousness of the pacifist convictions of those who gave it out.

Donald Calhoun's article in Vol. 2, No. 4 of Retort seems to me a good example of shortsightedness in the cause of anti-conscription. I think that he has made out an excellent case for

duce photographically (the pages were often badly faded besides). Given that the magazine would have to be reset, it seemed worthwhile to select material across the range of issues, rather than just re-issuing a single number of the magazine. In so doing we have tried to provide a representative sample of the writing, not just the best.

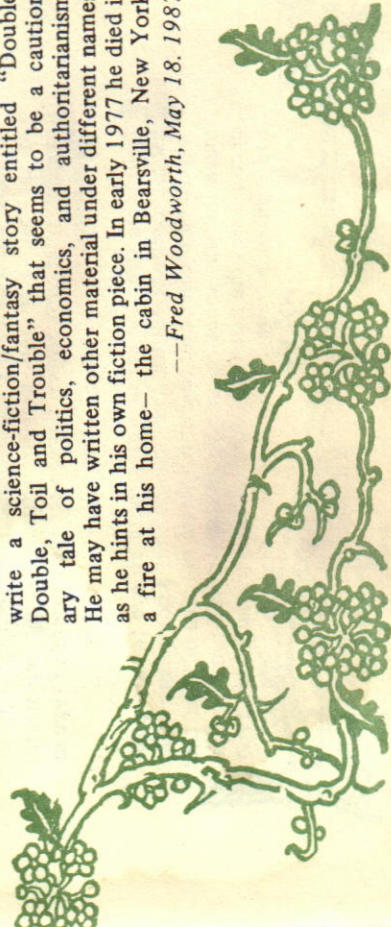
(For those who are interested in such details, we reset the pages in the closest available typeset to Cantine's that we had on our machinery, at the same size and column width, even breaking the lines at the same places in order to conserve his loose word-spacing. One single page in the present edition—page 63—we reproduced photographically from the original, and it will give an idea of why the rest of the edition needed the treatment we provided.)

Getting to know the *Retort* with this kind of close contact with the text, we have come to like and admire the magazine—especially Holley Cantine's logical, ethical style of Anarchism, which is so much at variance with some of the goofy mystic, religious, or workers-council preoccupied babble that passes for Anarchism in some circles.

What brought about the end of the periodical? It is hard to tell, since the editor evidently did have plans for further issues. Our guess is that he planned a big, elaborate production for the tenth anniversary number, and it involved such a huge effort that he bogged down in production. If he'd planned a somewhat greater number of pages (say, 72; the publication was usually about 60), the extra typesetting work alone could have run to dozens of extra hours. It's possible he started it but somewhere in the unending hours of toil he got tired and put it aside, perhaps returning now and then to do a little more, but getting farther and farther off schedule, until at last he dropped it altogether. Perhaps somewhere in a barn in upstate New York there lies even now a rusting press with a pair of pages of type still locked in for printing, for that intended tenth-anniversary issue.

As for Holley R. Cantine, Jr., little else was ever heard of him in Anarchist circles. Around 1960 he did write a science-fiction/fantasy story entitled "Double, Double, Toil and Trouble" that seems to be a cautionary tale of politics, economics, and authoritarianism. He may have written other material under different names, as he hints in his own fiction piece. In early 1977 he died in a fire at his home—the cabin in Bearsville, New York.

—Fred Woodworth, May 18, 1987.



THE MATCH! Historic Reprint Series: *The Retort*, 1942-51 Special Anthology Issue

ONE OF THE BEST ANARCHIST PERIODICALS that has ever been produced was the small, intermittent (and practically unknown today) *RETORT*, published by Holley R. Cantine, Jr. from Bearsville, New York in the years 1942-51.

What made it one of the best was the writing of its editor-publisher, who was completely uninterested in aligning with any particular group, and thus remained un beholden to anyone's sectarian interests. Unfortunately, time almost has obliterated Cantine's contribution to Anarchist literature; radicals of the present day have had practically no opportunity to read a single thing Cantine ever wrote, as all his essays and stories have been out of print for many years, while the perceived gloriousness of events in the Haymarket/Berkman Goldman/Russian Revolution era has so eclipsed everything else that radical history between the end of the Spanish Civil War and the beginning of student protests in the 1960s has come to seem like nothing more than a long and unlit tunnel.

Unlike the older Anarchist publications, the *Retort* represents itself not so much the organ of a movement, as a simple expression of Anarchist argument and philosophy, mingled with fiction, book reviews, and poetry. Perhaps in the case of the poetry alone does the magazine hark back to the more melodramatic days of libertarian publishing, and reading over the accumulated issues of the *Retort* one has to conclude that the poetry was its weakest feature, sparking the reflection that, in general, poetry in radical magazines is marginal at best and at worst a waste of space.

But despite the modern sound of the *Retort*, an occasional glimpse of change is seen—change that as seems to be normal in the twentieth century, is for the worse: in an article on prison resistance *Retort's* writer Clif Bennet remarks that "...the American prison guard does not as a rule develop a great deal of personal animosity even in

Pamphlets and journals of Anarchism, from past and present.

critical moments...". His observation, if true, reveals that in merely forty-odd years the bureaucratic and authoritarian system has succeeded in replacing bungling, form-follower types with actively malevolent, savage men who today take great delight in committing every sort of assault and travesty upon the prisoners over whom they have control.

PERHAPS the greatest surprise to the younger reader of the RETORT is the revelation that some kind of Anarchist protest publication existed in the World War II years in the U.S. at all. There were in fact draft protesters, war resisters, and political prisoners incarcerated for objection to the strife that subsequently became hallowed as "the good war". Entire books were being published on such subjects as how to evade the draft, how to behave as a political prisoner in American jails, how to maintain individuality in a society of increasing regimentation and uniformity of outlook.

Yet, *Retort* was not grim. It often had time for comic relief, such as the dissection of the Socialist Workers' support of the draft on grounds that military training would prove useful for the proletariat in its eventual upheaval to topple the government. *Retort* reproduced to devastating effect an Army official's admission that the mentally retarded made the best soldiers, since they followed orders most slavishly. When *Retort's* editor went to a party (see p. 61, this edition), he felt perfectly free to write about it in the magazine. In most ways Cantine's journal foreshadowed the later slogan and claim that The Personal Is Political.

And if personal attitudes and actions were conceived as having an effect on society at large, that wasn't just a good, accidental effect: it was actually the most important tendency in operation. Change in society meant, to Cantine, change in the individual person. For him Anarchism was no strange, rhetorical-sounding ("to the barricades!") posture; neither was it some predetermined formula that would automatically usher in a "free" society at the triumph of the proper economic system, like a light coming on at the opening of the refrigerator door. For Cantine, Anarchism meant more than economics; it meant an end to the domination of the individual by the state. Indeed it is surprising how many other "Anarchist" publications and books one can peruse without ever finding the slightest mention of this overwhelming but elementary fact, so lost are they in their eager avidity for shop-committees, communal ownership, and all the other trappings of communism, or, as in the case of the present libertarian rightists, obsessional desire for "market" values, "laissez-faire" business, and all the other trappings of capitalism.

ATTRACTED to the RETORT were a number of contributors, including some surprising names. Paul Goodman wrote an article or two, so did George Woodcock. Kenneth Patchen, Ammon Hennacy and Herbert Read. For the reader who is unacquainted with '40s-era Anarchist periodicals the name of Alex Comfort (author, "The Joy of Sex") will come as a shock, and almost everyone will raise an eyebrow on discovering that Saul Bellow appeared in RETORT's pages. The sweep of effect of Anarchism is indeed broad, if the truth is known.

What with all his contributors, editor Cantine (assisted in some measure by companion Dachine Rainer) was luckily spared the task of writing all the material for his issues alone. However, he did run what was essentially a lone-hand operation of production from his hillside print-shop near the tiny village of Beaverville, New York (so tiny that our atlas doesn't even show it, and we had to consult a zip-code directory to find any trace of its existence). Somehow having acquired the old printing press of the assassinated Anarchist, Carlo Tresca, Cantine shipped the machinery and type to his isolated outpost of progressivism where he painstakingly ran off issue after issue of his new magazine, double-page at a time.

The magazine came out sporadically, three issues in 1942, two in 1943, one in '44, three in '45, one in '46, two in '47, one in '49, and two in '51. At the end of the last issue is a notice for the upcoming tenth-anniversary issue, which never was completed.

Probably many of the delays in publication were occasioned simply by the extreme, almost unimaginable to those who have never undertaken such a task, difficulty of setting all the type by hand. When one considers that it may have required an entire hour to set a single paragraph in the *Retort*, plus time needed to print the resulting pages, and more time to re-distribute the pages of type in order to set up new pages, the expenditure of effort is staggering; and seen in this light it is nothing short of astounding that Cantine was able to get the periodical out so frequently—or at all. For the present edition, using automatic machinery, it took several days to set the amount of type in these pages.

IN looking over the set of *Retort* with an eye toward publishing a reprint edition, we decided that a composite issue was called for in order to communicate the idea of what the magazine was about, most effectively. Adding force to this decision was the fact that Cantine's old press and worn type had printed a somewhat uneven page that wouldn't repro-